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The Nebraska Bird Review

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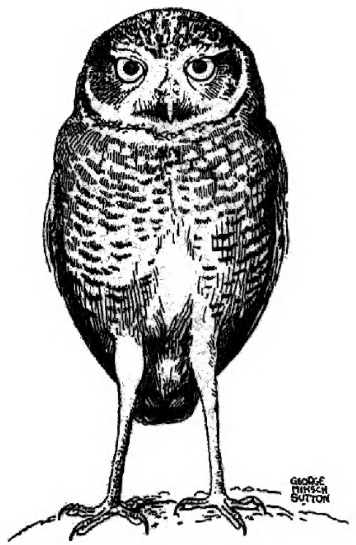
Volume 87 December 2019 Number 4



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FALL FIELD REPORT, August-November 2019

Compiled by W. Ross Silcock
P.O. Box 57, Tabor, IA 51653
silcock@rosssilcock.com

INTRODUCTION

By far the most striking feature of this fall's report is the large number of lingering migrants, a trend that is continuing and apparently increasing, especially among passerines. Editor Jan Paseka counted 17 uses of the word "tardy" and 43 of "late" or "latest". It is tempting to relate this to the warmer environment and resulting increased availability of food items at higher latitudes and later dates than in previous years.

A sad note: a startling occurrence in Gering, *Scotts Bluff* 20 Aug was described by Marie Smith: "We had a huge hailstorm around 10:30. The hail was probably pea to quarter sized, but it was driven by what felt like tornadic winds. We went [downtown] this morning and collected 258 pounds of dead birds. I am estimating that 50% were American Robins, 35% were English Sparrows, 14% were House Finches, and 1% were Pine Siskins." After some calculations using weights found online, the 258 lbs translates into at least 2000 and as many as 3300 birds.

Perhaps of most interest are breeding records that are new to the state. First state breeding records were made by Black-bellied Whistling-Duck and Ring-necked Duck, contrastingly one ranging south and the other following recent trends of northward range expansions. Common Gallinules bred quite far to the north, and the first breeding record for Cattle Egret in the RWB, eighth overall for the state, was accompanied by important breeding records there of Eared Grebe and White-faced Ibis. Mississippi Kites bred in *Lancaster* for the first time, and dependent fledglings in late Oct were observed for Red Crossbill and Northern Cardinal.

High numbers are often intriguing. The biggest surprise was the incredible number of reports of Canada Warbler; the 33 reports involved about 35 individuals. Carolina Wrens also spread out in numbers, with some 21 extralimital reports around the state. Lincoln hosted high counts of 1415 Chimney Swifts and 10,000 Purple Martins, both at roosts. A count of 200 Eastern Kingbirds was impressive. The 87 Red-breasted Nuthatches in Sowbelly Canyon suggested an invasion year, but the best count in the east was only four. Good numbers were reported of Red Crossbills, but only five Purple Finches and five Snow Buntings had appeared by the end of the period. Five Northern Saw-whet Owls were detected in Sowbelly Canyon.

Major rarities were few for a fall season, but of good quality. They included Nebraska's first documented record of Mexican Duck, 6th Harris's Hawk, 11th Long-tailed Jaeger, and 15th Brant. Of miscellaneous interest were the 6th and 7th records of the *Buteo jamaicensis abieticola* subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk, recorded Type 4 Red Crossbills, second record of the Rocky Mountain form of Downy Woodpecker, 2nd latest ever Great Egret, 3rd latest ever Lewis's Woodpecker, Bohemian Waxwing and White-winged Crossbill in the northeast, and 3rd ever Red-naped Sapsucker east of the Panhandle. Fall-specific rarities were the 4th Cape May Warbler, 5th Hudsonian Godwit, and 9th documented Blackpoll Warbler.

Readers will quickly note that I continue to make changes in the content and format of these Seasonal Reports, primarily because of the ever-increasing use by birders of eBird. At least 98% of the reports I compile come from eBird. NEBIRDS still provides very useful sightings, and a few records, especially photographs, are derived from social media. The most obvious change in this report is the absence of detailed context information on dates and numbers now that it is easily accessed in Birds of Nebraska- Online (BONO, www.birdsofnebraska.org). Species of less-than-annual occurrence ("casual" or "accidental") are not included unless they are reported. All species with rare or higher statuses are included, but if they have no reports, I note that. For all species that are rare in part of their ranges or at a certain season, I include all reports pertinent to that range segment or season. The comment "Routine reports" indicates that there were no reports that provided new early dates, late dates, or high numbers; in other words, nothing that adds to the information in BONO. I generally follow decisions by the NOU Records Committee and eBird reviewers, although I reserve the right to differ on occasion and explain why in all such cases. As I do these seasonal reports, I update BONO in real time, and so, with this Fall 2019 report, BONO is up to date through 30 Nov 2019. And finally, sincere thanks to all **112** of you who took the time to get your sightings into the record by whatever means. Please let me know if you have comments, suggestions, or criticism of this evolving process and this report.

ABBREVIATIONS

BOL: Branched Oak Lake SRA, *Lancaster*
CBL: Capitol Beach Lake, *Lancaster*
CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, *Garden*
CSP: Chadron SP, *Dawes*
FF: Fontenelle Forest, *Sarpy*
GPD: Gavins Point Dam, *Cedar*
HL: Holmes Lake, Lincoln, *Lancaster*
ICSP: Indian Cave SP, *Nemaha* and *Richardson*
LM: Lake McConaughy, *Keith*
LNB: Lakes North and Babcock, *Platte*
LO: Lake Ogallala, *Keith*
LSWNP: Lincoln Saline Wetlands Nature Park, Lincoln, *Lancaster*
m.ob.: many observers

MWCW: Marsh Wren Community Wetlands, Lincoln, *Lancaster*
NC: Nature Center
NM: National Monument
NNF: Nebraska National Forest
NOURC: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge
OR: Oliver Reservoir SRA, *Kimball*
PL: Pawnee Lake SRA, *Lancaster*
PSP: Ponca SP, *Dixon*
RA: Recreation Area
RWB: Rainwater Basin, including several south-central and southeastern playa basins
SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, *Lancaster*
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s)
SP: State Park
SRA: State Recreation Area
WHNC: Wildcat Hills NC, *Scotts Bluff*
WMA: (State) Wildlife Management Area
WP: Wilderness Park, *Lancaster*
WPA: (Federal) Waterfowl Production Area

OBSERVERS

Kayla Baker (KBa)
Dina Barta (DBa)
Wendy Becker (WBe)
Eric Bents (EBe)
Blair Bernson (BBe)
Dylan Beyer (DBe)
Scott Bradley (SBd)
Stephen Brenner (SBr)
Charles B. Bridgham (CBB)
Ed Brogie (EBr)
Lee Brogie (LBr)
Mark Brogie (MB)
Barbara Brown (BBr)
William Buskirk (WBu)
John Carlini (JCa)
Kathleen Crawford-Rose (KCR)
Olivia DaRugna (ODa)
Jeff Dawson (JDa)
Kathy DeLara (KD)
Roger Dietrich (RD)
James E. Ducey (JED)
Seth Dudley (SDu)
Paul Dunbar (PD)
Kathy Mihm Dunning (KMD)
Curtis Dykstra (CDy)
Boni Edwards (BEd)
Larry Einemann (LE)
Dave Ely (DE)
William Flack (WF)
Rita Flohr (RFl)
Andrew Furman (AF)
Tom Gannon (TG)
Bob and Kathi Gerten (B&KG)
Mackenzie Goldthwait (MGo)
Katie Gooby (KGo)
Alan Grenon (AG)
Marie Griffin (MGr)
Kyle Gust (KGu)
Tim Hajda (TH)
John W. Hall (JWH)
Knut Hansen (KHa)
Robin Harding (RH)
Kadynn Hatfield (KH)
David Heidt (DH)
Wayne Hochstetler (WHo)
Paula Hoppe (PHo)
Bill F. Huser (BFH)
Esa Jarvi (EJa)
Todd Jensen (TJe)
Heather Johnson (HJo)

Jan Johnson (JJ)
Mike Johnson (MJo)
Joel G. Jorgensen (JGJ)
Joshua Keller (JKe)
Doug Kibbe (DKi)
Dan Kim (DK)
Kelly Krechmer (KKr)
Steve Kruse (SKr)
David Lowman (DLo)
Tucker Lutter (TLu)
Mary Mai (MMa)
Sam Manning (SMa)
Fran Maunder (FMa)
Sharla Meester (SMe)
Steven Mlodinow (SMl)
Wayne Mollhoff (WM)
Steve Morris (SM)
Jonathan Nikkila (JNi)
Marsha Nyffeler (MN)
Loren and Babs Padelford (L&BP)
Shane Patterson (SPa)
Theresa Pella (TP)
Whitney Pennington (WPe)
Brian Peterson (BP)
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Joshua Potter (JPo)
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Luke Randall (LRa)
Paul Randall (PRa)
Sam Randall (SRa)
Lanny Randolph (LR)
Neal Ratzlaff (NR)
Ed Raynor (ERa)
Ben Ream (BRe)
Allen Reyer (ARy)
Justin Rink (JR)
Gary Roberts (GR)
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Shari Schwartz (SSc)
Ruben Siegfried (RSg)
W. Ross Silcock (WRS)
Kent Skaggs (KS)
Linda Sullivan (LSu)
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Jerry Toll (JT)
David Tønnessen (DTo)
Moni Usasz (MUs)
Matthew and Cynthia Van Den Broeke (M&CV)
T.J. Walker (TJW)
John Walter (JWa)
Don and Marion Weidemann (D&MW)
Ron and Susan Whitney (R&SW)
Andrea Wiggins (AWi)
Roger Wilder (RWi)
Michael Willison (MW)
Max Wilson (MWi)
Elizabeth Winter (EWi)
Greg Wright (GWr)

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: Nebraska's first breeding record was a brood of five plus two adults detected at Funk WPA, *Phelps* 28 Sep (KKr); on 15 Oct nine young were counted (MB, EBr, BFH, JP, photos). Northernmost to date for the state were five in northern *Knox* and *Cedar* 16 Nov (MB, EBr, PR, BFH).

Snow Goose: The 10,000 at LM 8 Nov (WBu) was a record high westerly fall count.

Ross's Goose: Routine reports.

Greater White-fronted Goose: The 1800 in *Cass* 29 Oct 2019 was a good fall count. Rare in the west, the only reports there were from *Scottsbluff*, seven on 8 Nov (KD) and one on 27 Nov (SRa, LRa, PRa).

Brant: One with Cackling Geese in *Clay* 7 Nov (KGu fide JGJ; photo) is only the 9th fall record for the state, 15th overall. The photo indicated the eastern subspecies *Branta bernicla hrota*.

Cackling Goose: One at Lake Yankton, *Cedar* 6 Aug, present since 22 Apr, appeared to have a broken wing (MB).

Mute Swan: The only reports were of single presumed domestic birds at Heartland of America Park, *Douglas* during the period (MWi, RWi).

Trumpeter Swan: Routine reports.

Tundra Swan: Two groups were reported: two were on a pond in the Fremont, *Dodge* area 17-25 Nov (JGJ, m. ob.), and five were in a mixed flock of 16 with Trumpeter Swans in *Saunders* 24-25 Nov (L&BP photo, PR).

Wood Duck: Routine reports.

Blue-winged Teal: Rather late were singles at two locations in *Lancaster* 13 and 14 Nov (SBr, LE).

Cinnamon Teal: Routine reports.

Northern Shoveler: The 1500 at Rat and Beaver Lake WMA, *Cherry* (HJo) was a good count.

Gadwall: Routine reports.

American Wigeon: Routine reports.

Mallard: Routine reports.

American Black Duck: In recent years reports have been less than annual. This fall, the single report was of one photographed at Bazile Creek WMA, *Knox* 10 Nov (MB).

Mexican Duck: Only the 3rd Nebraska report and first documented of this taxon of unsettled taxonomic status was of one photographed in a small pond with Mallards in *Perkins* 11 Sep 2019 (SMl, DE, WRS).

Northern Pintail: Routine reports.

Green-winged Teal: Routine reports.

Canvasback: Routine reports.

Redhead: Routine reports.

Ring-necked Duck: A surprise was the first modern Nebraska breeding record; a hen and brood were photographed on a wetland at NNF McKelvie, *Cherry* 16 Sep (GWr photo). One in *Jefferson* 7 Sep (SPa) was early.

Greater Scaup: Routine reports.

Lesser Scaup: The 15 at CLNWR 2 Sep 2019 were early fall migrants (SMl).

Surf Scoter: There were reports of single birds from three locations: at BOL a juvenile 19 Oct (MW), CBL 2-9 Nov (LE), and Skyview Lake, *Madison* 5-8 Nov (MB. EBr, JTh, LBr).

White-winged Scoter: There were reports from three locations: up to five at Lewis and Clark Lake, *Cedar* and *Knox* 2-15 Nov (MB, m. ob.), one in *Burt* 7 Nov (BRe), and 1 to 2 at Wildwood WMA, *Lancaster* (JGJ, SBr, m. ob.).

Black Scoter: The only reports were of the same single bird on Lewis and Clark Lake, *Cedar* and *Knox* 2-23 Nov (MB, m. ob.).

Long-tailed Duck: A good showing was of a total of seven birds at five locations 2-23 Nov (m. ob.).

Bufflehead: Although most likely early migrants, a pair photographed at CLNWR 11 Sep (KMD) was intriguing; there is only one Nebraska breeding record.

Common Goldeneye: Routine reports.
Hooded Merganser: A record high fall tally was the 336 at BOL 6 Nov (JGJ).
Common Merganser: Routine reports.
Red-breasted Merganser: One at Lake Minatare, *Scotts Bluff* 19 Oct (SMl) was early. The 47 at PL 1 Nov (LE) was second highest on record for fall.
Ruddy Duck: Routine reports.
Northern Bobwhite: Routine reports.
Gray Partridge: Reports of possibly three broods, one in *Antelope* 16 Aug (MB) and 1-2 in *Knox* 28 Aug (MB) were encouraging.
Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.
Sharp-tailed Grouse: Routine reports.
Greater Prairie-Chicken: Reports from the Panhandle are few, and so reports of three at CLNWR 11 Sep (KMD) and two in *Deuel* 15 Sep (LE) were noteworthy as only the 3rd and 2nd from those locations respectively.
Wild Turkey: Routine reports.
Pied-billed Grebe: Routine reports.
Horned Grebe: Routine reports.
Eared Grebe: As noted in the Summer Report, water conditions were extreme in many parts of the state, notably the RWB; several reported early dates this fall away from expected breeding areas may have been a consequence. One to two that summered in *Pierce* were still present 17 Aug (JTh, DLo), one was at Swan Lake, *Holt* 14 Aug (TJW), and two were at LO 10 Aug (SMl). An amazing second highest summer count on record was the 800 at CLNWR 10 Aug (SMl), also apparently a result of the high water levels there.
Western Grebe: Routine reports.
Clark's Grebe: Routine reports.
Rock Pigeon: Routine reports.
Eurasian Collared-Dove: A new high count for the east was the 243 in Lincoln, *Lancaster* 18 Oct (M&CV).
White-winged Dove: Reports decline rapidly after Sep; the only such reports were of singles, possibly the same bird, in a Gering, *Scotts Bluff* yard Oct 27 and Nov 24 (RSg), and three at another *Scotts Bluff* location 29 Nov (SMl).
Mourning Dove: The 796 at Fremont Lakes SRA, *Dodge* 26 Sep (GR) was an excellent tally. One to two in Gordon, *Sheridan* 5-19 Oct (D&MW) were tardy for the location.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Routine reports.
Black-billed Cuckoo: None were reported of this declining species with last dates in early Oct.
Common Nighthawk: Routine reports.
Common Poorwill: One at Keller Park SRA, *Brown* 8 Aug (AWi) was at the eastern edge of the expected summer range.
Chuck-will's-widow: Only the 8th post-Jun record for the state was of one heard in *Cedar* 7 Aug (BFH).
Eastern Whip-poor-will: None were reported of this presumably common but rarely detected fall migrant.

Chimney Swift: A record high fall tally was the 1415 entering a chimney on a Lincoln, *Lancaster* building 23 Sep (SSc, JCa). One at Gotte Park, *Kimball* 3 Sep (JGJ) was west of the expected summer range; it was most likely a migrant.

White-throated Swift: Routine reports.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: One in a Bellevue, *Sarpy* yard 16 Oct (ARy) was tardy. One at CSP during 28-31 Aug (KBa) was westerly as were singles at each of two locations in North Platte, *Lincoln* 3 and 10 Sep (BEd).

Broad-tailed Hummingbird: Routine reports.

Rufous Hummingbird: A juvenile male photographed in a *Lancaster* yard Aug 22 (R&SW) was a rare find for the east, where it is nevertheless annual. One in *Deuel* 19 Sep (SDu) was rather late.

Calliope Hummingbird: A new late date was established by one in a Gering, *Scotts Bluff* yard 30 Sep-4 Oct (RSg).

Virginia Rail: A surprise was one photographed wandering around the streets of downtown Wahoo, *Saunders* on the late date 7 Nov (PHo).

Sora: Routine reports.

Common Gallinule: This species is less than annual in the state, but even more surprising for the northerly location was an apparent pair with a brood of nine (only two adults were seen) near Niobrara SP, *Knox* 10 Aug-27 Sep (MB, m. ob.). A second report was of a juvenile at Langdon Bend WMA, *Nemaha* 1 Sep (SMa).

American Coot: Routine reports.

Sandhill Crane: Reports were from three locations where breeding has or might have occurred: a family group was at Harvard WPA, *Clay* 17 Aug (JGJ, SBr), two were near Lake Wanahoo, *Saunders* 26 Aug (PHo), and two were along Toadstool Park Road, *Sioux* 24 Aug (SMl, recording).

Whooping Crane: Routine reports.

Black-necked Stilt: Tardy birds were one at LO 9 Sep (MGo, JDa) and another very late at Funk WPA, *Phelps* 22-29 Sep (JNi, LR, RH). Four at Nathan's Lake, *Washington* 21-31 Aug were easterly, where rare.

American Avocet: Routine reports.

Black-bellied Plover: Routine reports.

American Golden-Plover: Adults are rare in fall, and so the six in *Dakota* 31 Aug (BFH) were noteworthy. The only other reports were of presumed juveniles, which migrate later: two at BOL 26 Sep (KRo) and 18 in *York* 15 Oct (SM).

Killdeer: Routine reports.

Semipalmated Plover: Routine reports.

Piping Plover: Routine reports.

Mountain Plover: None were reported of this fairly common southwest Panhandle fall migrant with last dates in mid-Sep.

Upland Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Long-billed Curlew: Routine reports.

Hudsonian Godwit: Less than annual in fall with only four records to date for the state, there were two reports this fall, both at BOL: the 5th documented record was of a juvenile photographed 21 Aug (MW, DBe). Two were reported there 3 Sep but not documented (eBird.org).

Marbled Godwit: Less than annual in fall in the east and central and thus noteworthy were singles in *Lancaster* 21 Aug (MW, DBe, photo) and *Adams* the same day (WF). Annual but rare in the west, three were at CLNWR 10 Aug (SMl).
Stilt Sandpiper: Routine reports.
Sanderling: Routine reports.
Dunlin: Routine reports.
Baird's Sandpiper: Routine reports.
Least Sandpiper: Routine reports.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Routine reports.
Pectoral Sandpiper: Routine reports.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: Routine reports.
Western Sandpiper: Routine reports.
Short-billed Dowitcher: Routine reports.
Long-billed Dowitcher: Routine reports.
American Woodcock: The only report was of two in *Dakota* 8 Oct (BFH).
Wilson's Snipe: The 125 on 90th Road, *Hall* 15 Sep (RFl) was second highest fall count on record.
Solitary Sandpiper: Routine reports.
Lesser Yellowlegs: Routine reports.
Willet: Rare in fall in the east, up to 15 were at BOL 1-21 Aug (LE, MW, DBe).
Greater Yellowlegs: The 58 at Kiowa WMA, *Scotts Bluff* 17 Sep (SMl) was 3rd highest fall tally on record.
Wilson's Phalarope: Routine reports.
Red-necked Phalarope: Rare in the east, one was rather late at Conestoga Lake, *Lancaster* 13 Oct (MW). Also in the east, three juveniles were at CBL 2 Sep (LE) and a single in basic plumage was at Jackson SL, *Dakota* 4-6 Oct (BFH, JP, m. ob.).
Long-tailed Jaeger: Nebraska's 10th fall record, 11th overall, was an adult at Calamus Fish Hatchery, *Garfield* 16-20 Sep (CBB fide JGJ, MB; photo, video).
Black-legged Kittiwake: Only the 23rd fall record for the state, 24th overall, was of one at GPD 16-26 Nov (BFH, m. ob; photos).
Sabine's Gull: Routine reports.
Bonaparte's Gull: Routine reports.
Laughing Gull: None were reported of this rare but annual summer visitor with last dates in late Oct.
Franklin's Gull: Routine reports.
Mew Gull: None were reported of this rare but annual fall migrant with first dates in late Nov.
Ring-billed Gull: Routine reports.
California Gull: This species is less than annual in the east, but there were several records this fall, bringing the overall total for eastern fall records to 23. In the GPD area, a 3rd cycle bird was found 29 Sep (MB, EBr), a basic adult 2 Nov (MB, EBr, SMe, photo), and a different basic adult 9 Nov (MB, photo). At BOL, a juvenile was photographed 25 Oct (JGJ, SBr).
Herring Gull: Adults usually arrive after mid-Sep, and so of note was one early at LO 7-9 Sep (DTo, m. ob.).

Iceland (Thayer's) Gull: There were two reports of early arrivals. A first cycle bird was at GPD 29 Oct-7 Nov (MB, BFH, RD, EBr), and another was very early at LM 8 Oct (SMl).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: The four adults and one juvenile at LM 8 Oct (SMl) was a good count.

Glaucous Gull: Most Nebraska reports are of first cycle birds, such as one at GPD 16 Nov (RD, m. ob.) and possibly a different bird 25 Nov (MB), but an adult was at Lake Minatare, *Scotts Bluff* 12 Nov (SMl).

Great Black-backed Gull: An adult at LM 11 Sep-8 Oct (BP photo, SMl) was the 18th fall record for the state. It is noteworthy that the earliest eight of the 18 fall dates are of adults, and nine of the last ten are of immatures.

Least Tern: Routine reports.

Caspian Tern: Routine reports.

Black Tern: One at Funk WPA, *Phelps* 2 Oct (WF) was rather late.

Common Tern: 5th latest on record was one at BOL 19 Oct (MW).

Arctic Tern: The report and description of a one-year-old bird at Sutherland Reservoir, *Lincoln* 2 Sep (SMl) will be considered by NOURC.

Forster's Tern: Routine reports.

Pacific Loon: One at Lake Minatare, *Scotts Bluff* 12 Nov (SMl) was photographed 18 Nov (MB, EBr). The species is of annual occurrence; there are 70+ fall records.

Common Loon: Routine reports.

Neotropic Cormorant: None were reported of this rare summer visitor with last dates late Sep.

Double-crested Cormorant: Routine reports.

American White Pelican: Routine reports.

American Bittern: Routine reports.

Least Bittern: Sightings from a wetland near Niobrara SP, *Knox* 6-11 Aug (SMa, EBr, DH) suggest summering there. Sightings from *Dakota* 15 Aug (BFH) and *Antelope* 19 Aug (MB) probably were of migrants, as was one of a rather late bird in *Fillmore* 18 Sep (KGo).

Great Blue Heron: Routine reports.

Great Egret: The only report from the Panhandle, where rare, was of one in *Deuel* 19 Sep (SDu). Second latest ever for Nebraska (by two days) was one at Wagon Train RA, *Lancaster* 23 Nov (JGJ).

Snowy Egret: Routine reports.

Little Blue Heron: None were reported for this fall season nor for the preceding summer season. This species is generally an uncommon summer and fall visitor with last dates in early Oct.

Cattle Egret: The first RWB breeding record and 8th for the state was of a colony of about "a dozen or more" nests at Harvard WPA, *Clay* on 20 Aug (JGJ, SBr). Around 80 adults were there; most nests had nearly full-grown young but at least one still had eggs.

Green Heron: Less than annual in the Panhandle, there were two reports: singles were at OR 1 Sep (SMl) and along Lodgepole Creek, *Kimball* 29 Sep (SMl). These are only the 7th and 8th fall Panhandle records.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Routine reports.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: The only report was of two juveniles at Harvard WPA, *Clay* 20 Aug (JGJ, SBr).

White-faced Ibis: Breeding continued at Harvard WPA, *Clay*, a regular breeding site for this species. On 20 Aug, 50-70 birds were present along with multiple nests with young, at least one of which was near fledging (JGJ, SBr).

This Harris's Hawk was captured by Marie Griffin at Offutt Air Force Base, Sarpy 14 Nov 2019 as part of USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services control procedures to prevent bird collisions with aircraft.

Turkey Vulture: Routine reports.

Osprey: Routine reports.

Golden Eagle: Routine reports.

Northern Harrier: Routine reports.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Routine reports.

Cooper's Hawk: Routine reports.

Northern Goshawk: Suggestive of an influx year, there were four reports, more than usual. Singles were in *Dixon* 3 Nov (JJ), *Lancaster* 19 Nov (SKr photo), and *Scotts Bluff* 29 Nov (SMl). In addition, one was released 21 Nov by FF Raptor Recovery that had been recovered in western Nebraska a month earlier (fide JGJ). It was only the 9th goshawk handled by Raptor Recovery since 1976.

Bald Eagle: Routine reports.

Mississippi Kite: The first known breeding in Lincoln, *Lancaster* occurred this year; adults had been seen in 2018 in the Antelope Park area, and this summer two

adults were in the area 31 Jul-2 Aug. A nest was found, followed by sightings of one or two juveniles being fed near the nest 11 Sep (DBa). Breeding continued with success in North Platte, *Lincoln*, where a newly fledged juvenile was photographed with an adult 17 Aug (GWr). A pre-departure group of 26 was in a favored tree in North Platte 26 Aug (BEd). No breeding evidence was obtained in Imperial, *Chase* but two adults were there 8 Sep (DKi, m. ob.). Up to seven were at the traditional Ogallala, *Keith* breeding location 10 Sep (BP).

Harris's Hawk: A major surprise was one captured at Offutt Air Force Base, *Sarpy* 14 Nov as part of USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services control procedures to prevent bird collisions with aircraft. Captured birds are usually banded and released away from the base (MGr fide JGJ). This bird was unmarked and is the 6th record for Nebraska.

Red-shouldered Hawk: The nine reports of a total of five birds were from five expected locations in four southeastern counties (*Otoe, Lancaster, Gage, Nemaha*) (m. ob.).

Broad-winged Hawk: Routine reports.

Swainson's Hawk: Best count was a kettle of 350 over Hastings, *Adams* 30 Sep (PD).

This Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis abieticola*) was photographed by Theresa Pella in rural Johnson 13 Oct 2019. The heavily marked breast band and malar areas are apparent.

Red-tailed Hawk (*borealis*): The 6 at BOL 31 Oct (LE) was a good count. Only one "Krider's", a color morph of *Buteo jamaicensis borealis*, was reported, a single in *Kearney* 28 Sep (LR, RH).

Red-tailed Hawk (*abieticola*): Only the 6th and 7th records for Nebraska of this somewhat enigmatic and recently recognized form were of singles photographed in *Johnson* 13 Oct (TP, eBird.org) and *Douglas* 28 Nov (SMa, eBird.org).

Red-tailed Hawk (*calurus*): Routine reports.

Red-tailed Hawk (*harlani*): Routine reports.

This Red-tailed Hawk (*B. j. abieticola*) was photographed by Sam Manning in Douglas 28 Nov 2019. The heavily marked breast band and malar areas are apparent.

Rough-legged Hawk: Routine reports.

Ferruginous Hawk: Routine reports.

Barn Owl: The nest site at PSP (see Summer) had two almost full-grown remaining fledglings 21 Aug (BFH).

Eastern Screech-Owl: Routine reports.

Great Horned Owl: Routine reports.

Snowy Owl: None were reported of this occasionally common winter visitor with first dates in mid-Nov.

Burrowing Owl: One lingered rather late until 2 Nov at a known breeding site, Prairie Dog WMA, *Kearney* (KS).

Barred Owl: Routine reports.

Long-eared Owl: The six reports were statewide from 19 Oct-22 Nov (m. ob.), thus probably arriving winter visitors or possibly migrants.

Short-eared Owl: Similar to the preceding species, the five reports were statewide from 15 Oct- 23 Nov (m. ob.), also suggestive of arriving winter visitors.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Observers are making more effort to find this species; five, three of them recorded, were in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 19 Oct (SMl). Most Saw-whets netted in western Iowa (JT) and in Nebraska (DK) are hatch year birds with a preponderance of females (https://birds.outdoornebraska.gov/northern-saw-whet-owl/), although singles captured using a playback loop at each of two *Lancaster* locations, PL and BOL, 7 and 14 Nov were a male and female (JGJ, SBr).

Belted Kingfisher: The five at BOL in *Lancaster* 14 Oct (LE) was a good tally.

Lewis's Woodpecker: 3rd latest on record was one at Exit 1 on Interstate 80, *Kimball* 19 Nov (SMl).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Grouping prior to southward movement was in full swing on the Pine Ridge in *Dawes* 25 Aug, where 64 were counted in the East Ash Creek area (SMl).

Red-belled Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Yellow-belled Sapsucker: 4th earliest on record for fall was one in *Dakota* 3 Sep (BFH). One at a Burwell, *Garfield* feeder 9 Nov (B&KG) was westerly and tardy.

Red-naped Sapsucker: Only the 3rd record east of the Panhandle was one in *Hitchcock* 15 Sep, identified from photos as a female of this species (BP, KH, JNi photos; GR, TJW).

Downy Woodpecker: Only the 2nd recent record of the Rocky Mountains subspecies *Picoides pubescens leucurus* was of two photographed at Exit 1 on Interstate 80, *Kimball* on 19 Nov (SMl). This subspecies lacks white spotting on its "shoulders".

Hairy Woodpecker: The 12 in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 19 Oct (SMl) was a good tally.

Northern Flicker: Routine reports.

Pileated Woodpecker: Routine reports.

American Kestrel: Routine reports.

Merlin: One of the "Taiga" long-distant migrant race *Falco columbarius columbarius* was early in *Boone* 3 Sep (MB).

Peregrine Falcon: Routine reports.

Prairie Falcon: Routine reports.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: One in *Butler* 5 Aug (LE) was early. There were several reports from the Panhandle, where it is rare to uncommon and annual in occurrence; these reports reflect the numerous reports in eastern Colorado, but it is virtually absent during migrations in central Nebraska and the central Great Plains.

Western Wood-Pewee: The 41 in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 24 Aug (SMl) was a good count.

Eastern Wood-Pewee: A rare migrant in the southwest, singles were in *Hitchcock* 14 Sep (JGJ, SBr) and *Chase* 8 Sep (JDa, DKi, MGo).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: One at LO 3 Sep was well-described, eliminating the possibility of Cordilleran Flycatcher (SMl, eBird.org). There are no Panhandle records, although another was at LO 26 Aug 2006.

Acadian Flycatcher: Oddly, there have been only three documented fall records, despite its increasing summer occurrence in southeastern Nebraska. This fall, details were provided for one "singing" at FF 29 Aug (KH) and two identified by call notes at ICSP 31 Aug (JR, m. ob.).

Alder Flycatcher: One in *Custer* 19 Aug (WF) was westerly.

Willow Flycatcher: One at PL 20 Sep (KHa, MW, BBe) was tardy.

Least Flycatcher: Routine reports.

Hammond's Flycatcher: Record late by about two weeks was one identified from photos in *Scotts Bluff* 12 Oct (KD).

Dusky Flycatcher: Of the four reports, three were by the same experienced observer (SMl); one was rather early in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 24 Aug, one was at Ash Hollow SHP, *Garden* 2 Sep, and another was record late at LO 8 Oct. The fourth report was of one at Smith Lake WMA, *Sheridan* 1 Sep (SBr).

Cordilleran Flycatcher: Although rarely reported during migrations, this fall there were six reports in the expected Panhandle migration corridor 24 Aug-14 Sep (SMl, SBr, KBa).

Eastern Phoebe: Routine reports.

Say's Phoebe: One in *Lancaster* 6 Oct (MW) was easterly and late; this species is less than annual in fall in the east.

Great Crested Flycatcher: Rare in the west away from known breeding areas, a migrant was at OR 1 Sep (SMl).

Cassin's Kingbird: Two in Hackberry Canyon, *Banner* 4 Oct (KD) were latest on record by about a week.

Western Kingbird: Routine reports.

Eastern Kingbird: The 200 near BOL, *Lancaster* 6 Sep (LSu) was 2nd highest fall count on record. One in *Kearney* 7 Oct (WF) tied for 4th latest on record.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One was still in the area near Table Rock, *Pawnee* 11 Aug (JJ) where nesting occurred (see Summer). The only other report was of one in *Webster* 8 Aug (WF).

Loggerhead Shrike: The 7 at Exit 1 on Interstate 80, *Kimball* 27 Aug (SMl) was a good count.

Northern Shrike: Routine reports.

White-eyed Vireo: Only the 13th fall record for the state was of a tardy bird at WP 25 Sep (JGJ).

Bell's Vireo: Somewhat tardy in the north were one at Burwell, *Garfield* 10 Sep (MB, EBr) and three at Calamus Reservoir, *Loup* the same day (MB, EBr), but quite late was one at Valentine NWR, *Cherry* 25 Sep (TP).

Yellow-throated Vireo: The six at WP 1 Sep (JGJ) was a good count.

Cassin's Vireo: Routine reports.

Blue-headed Vireo: One in Omaha, *Douglas* 23 Oct (JR) tied for 7th latest on record. This species is less than annual in the central and west in fall although this fall there were four reports, all in *Buffalo:* one was at Cottonmill Park rather early on 26 Aug (JNi), two were north of Kearney 4 Sep (WF, JWa), and singles were south of Kearney 6 Sep (AF) and at Cottonmill Park 23 Sep (JNi). There are two Nebraska reports of this species in early Aug, well before the 25-28 Aug expected arrival dates: one was in Omaha, *Douglas* this year on 1 Aug (KCR), the other in 2018 in *Merrick* 9 Aug (BP, GR). Both

were well-described, one accepted in eBird the other not; there are no similar early Aug records in eBird in Kansas or South Dakota.

Plumbeous Vireo: Routine reports.

Philadelphia Vireo: Rare in the central, one was at Cottonmill Park, *Buffalo* 5 Sep (JNi).

Warbling Vireo: Routine reports.

Red-eyed Vireo: Routine reports.

Pinyon Jay: None were reported of this uncommon but highly erratic resident and winter visitor in the west.

Blue Jay: Routine reports.

Black-billed Magpie: As in recent years, most reports were from *Scotts Bluff*, best count eight at Scotts Bluff NM 3 Sep (JGJ), with sightings also from known locations at Big Springs, *Deuel*, two on 24 Nov (MGo, DKi) and Ogallala, *Keith*, 1-2 on 15-19 Oct (WBe, BEd). Encouraging sightings elsewhere were of 2-3 in the Gordon, *Sheridan* area (WHo), one in *Cheyenne* 19 Sep (SDu) and, easterly, five in *Adams* 27 Sep (WF) about 15 miles from a regular location at Gibbon, *Buffalo*.

American Crow: Routine reports.

Horned Lark: Routine reports.

Bank Swallow: Routine reports.

Tree Swallow: Routine reports.

Violet-green Swallow: Four in Sowbelly Canyon 26 Aug (SMl) were tardy.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Routine reports.

Purple Martin: A large roost in Lincoln, *Lancaster* held 10,000 birds 30 Aug-3 Sep (SSc, JCa, LE). Westerly outposts at two locations were occupied: 64 were at Valentine, *Cherry* 8 Aug (JED) but only a single was reported at Ogallala, *Keith* 2 Aug (JPo).

Barn Swallow: Routine reports.

Cliff Swallow: Routine reports.

Black-capped Chickadee: The 42 in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 19 Oct (SMl) was a good count.

Mountain Chickadee: None were reported of this essentially annual winter visitor to the west with arrival dates 27-30 Sep.

Tufted Titmouse: The apparently small population in *Lancaster* is either hanging on or is having trouble establishing; singles at WP 24-25 Sep (TH, MUs) were the only reports from that county. Perhaps related, veteran observers expressed concern about low numbers seen: "finally… first one in Nebraska in visits this winter and last" (AG), and "our only sightings for the period" were singles in *Sarpy* 4 Sep and *Cass* 6 Sep (L&BP).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Numbers were very high in the west but had not translated into similar numbers in the east by the end of the period. Record high counts were the 87 in Sowbelly Canyon 19 Oct (SMl) and 31 there 12 Nov (SMl), while best count in the east for the period was only four, at Forest Lawn Cemetery, *Douglas* 4 and 26 Oct (SMa).

White-breasted Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Pygmy Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Brown Creeper: Routine reports.

Rock Wren: One in *Buffalo* 5 Oct (AF) was at the east edge of the expected fall migration corridor.

House Wren: One in Omaha, *Douglas* 23 Oct (JR) was rather late. A record high fall count was the 30 at Rock Creek SRA, *Dundy* 14 Sep (SMl).

Winter Wren: Routine reports.

Sedge Wren: Tardy were singles at Avoca, *Cass* 1 Nov (EBe) and MWCW 3 Nov (MUs).

Marsh Wren: Routine reports.

Carolina Wren: There was an amazing number of extralimital reports by multiple observers this fall, generally separated into three areas of the state: the southwest, with nine reports involving at least three birds from three locations in *Red Willow* and *Chase* 12-14 Sep, the central Platte River Valley, four reports involving five birds in *Hall* 8 Aug-19 Oct, and the northeast, eight reports involving six birds from six locations in *Knox, Dixon, Wayne,* and *Burt*.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: One at Exit 1 on Interstate 80, *Kimball* 7 Oct (ERa) was 3rd latest on record.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Routine reports.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Routine reports.

Eastern Bluebird: Routine reports.

Mountain Bluebird: Routine reports.

Townsend's Solitaire: One was early at Soldier Creek Campground, *Sioux* 25 Aug (SMl), and, for the east, one was early at BOL 13 and 15 Nov (JGJ, SKr).

Veery: None were reported of this annual but rare migrant east and west, less than annual central.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: None were reported of this less than annual statewide fall migrant. Oddly, no thrushes at all were reported this fall by Bellevue, *Sarpy* observers (L&BP).

Swainson's Thrush: One in *Sioux* 26 Aug (SMl) was rather early, and another in Omaha, *Douglas* 10 Oct (JR) rather late. Numbers were low, but not notably so.

Hermit Thrush: The status of the gray Rocky Mountains subspecies *Catharus guttatus auduboni* in Nebraska is unclear, although it is likely a rare migrant in the west, later in spring and earlier in fall than eastern subspecies *C. g. faxoni,* which would be rare in the west. A *C. g. auduboni* was near Bushnell, *Kimball* 29 Sep (SMl).

Wood Thrush: Westerly was one in *Adams* 5 Oct, the observer's "first for the county in 19 years" (PD).

American Robin: The 2500 at Cunningham Lake, *Douglas* 22 Oct (SBd) was a good count. A "very fuzzy juvenile" in *Adams* 15 Aug (FMa) was a bit late.

Gray Catbird: Two at Smith Lake WMA, *Sheridan* 19 Oct (D&MW) were late for the Panhandle. Numbers were high in the east; a good count was the 27 at WP 22 Sep (JGJ), and they were "all over the place" at BOL 22 Aug (M&CV).

Brown Thrasher: Numbers were good for this species also, with several observers in the east reporting counts of 10-11.

Sage Thrasher: Routine reports.

Northern Mockingbird: Routine reports.

European Starling: Routine reports.

Bohemian Waxwing: The only reports were of singles in Wayne, *Wayne* 9 and 24 Nov (EBr, LBr, photo, recording). This species is less than annual away from the northern Panhandle.

Cedar Waxwing: The 120 in Wayne, *Wayne* 24 Nov (EBr, LBr) was a good count.

American Pipit: Routine reports.

Sprague's Pipit: Four were early at Prairie Dog WMA, *Kearney* 13 Sep (LE). The 12 at SCP 16 Oct (LE) was a good count. These are regular locations for this species in migration.

Evening Grosbeak: One of two at WHNC was photographed 12 Nov (SMl) for the only report.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: The two reports were from regular locations: 37 were along Henry Road, *Sioux* 23 Nov (KD) and six were at Scotts Bluff NM, *Scotts Bluff* 29 Nov (SMl).

House Finch: Routine reports.

Purple Finch: Few were reported, a total of only five, all singles. One of these was heard in Carter Canyon, *Scotts Bluff* 29 Nov (SMl); this species is rare in the Panhandle.

Cassin's Finch: There were a surprising eight reports of this rare, erratic, but annual winter visitor involving 15 birds, all in *Scotts Bluff* and *Kimball* 16 Sep-12 Oct.

Common Redpoll: None were reported of this uncommon winter visitor with arrival dates in late Oct.

Red Crossbill: Following a good showing in late summer, there were at least 120 reports; numbers continued high statewide. At WHNC, 69 were counted 3 Aug (KD) and 120 were in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 19 Oct (SMl). In the east, 50 were at Forest Lawn Cemetery, *Douglas* 26 Oct (JR, m. ob.). Most reports were of the expected Type 2 Ponderosa Pine Crossbill, but recordings were made of Type 4 Douglas Fir Crossbill, surprisingly only in the east at Forest Lawn Cemetery 4 and 26 Oct (SMa, JR). An adult was feeding nestlings at CSP 31 Aug (SBr).

White-winged Crossbill: The only report was of two juveniles identified from photographs in a group of eight crossbills at Wayne, *Wayne* 17 Sep (EBr, LBr), record early by a month.

Pine Siskin: Good numbers were reported statewide totaling approximately 980 birds; best count was the 120 at WHNC 9 Oct (JGJ, SBr).

Lesser Goldfinch: One at Gering Cemetery, *Scotts Bluff* 9 Oct (JSS) was late. Best count was the 14 near Harrisburg, *Banner* 3 Sep (JGJ).

American Goldfinch: Routine reports.

Lapland Longspur: Routine reports.

Chestnut-collared Longspur: Routine reports.

Smith's Longspur: The only reports were of two at Bobcat Prairie, *Lancaster* 2 Nov (SBr, ODa) and six in *Jefferson* 3 Nov (SPa).

McCown's Longspur: The only report was of four near Bushnell, *Kimball* 3 Sep (JGJ).

Snow Bunting: Only five had arrived by the end of the period. One was at BOL 8 Nov (SKr), two in *Knox* 1 Nov (MB), one at PL 23-30 Nov (EJa, m. ob.), and two at LNB 19 Nov (MN).

Cassin's Sparrow: None were reported of this fairly common but erratic western and southwestern breeder with last dates in mid-Aug.

Grasshopper Sparrow: One at Lake Wanahoo, *Saunders* 23 Oct (EWi) was tardy.

Lark Sparrow: The six in *Gage* 24 Oct (SQ) were tardy.

Lark Bunting: Routine reports.

Chipping Sparrow: Tardy were two at Grand Island, *Hall* 16 Nov (RFl photo), and singles at Gordon, *Sheridan* 17 Nov (MB, EBr, photo) and Lincoln, *Lancaster* 17 Nov (MUs).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Routine reports.

Field Sparrow: Singles at HL 26 Nov (LE) and Walnut Creek Lake, *Sarpy* 27 Nov (WPe, JKe) were tardy.

Brewer's Sparrow: There were three reports of tardy singles, at Sutherland Reservoir, *Lincoln* 8 Oct (SMl), south of Sutherland, *Lincoln* 8 Oct (SMl), and one near Brady, *Lincoln* 9 Oct (BEd photo). This species is less than annual east of the Panhandle.

Fox Sparrow: One was in *Red Willow*, where less than annual, 9 Oct (WF).

American Tree Sparrow: Routine reports.

Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco: The 150 near Winnebago, *Thurston* 30 Nov (TLu) was a good count.

Dark-eyed (Cassiar) Junco: The only report was of two at Bayard, *Morrill* 26 Nov (MMa).

Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco: One at CSP 7 Sep (KD) was early, and one in Omaha, *Douglas* 18 Oct (WM) was early for the east. The 40 in Wildcat Hills, *Scotts Bluff* 12 Nov (SMl) was a good count.

Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco: The 27 in Carter Canyon, *Scotts Bluff* 29 Nov (SMl) was a good count, as was the 25 in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 19 Oct (SMl).

Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco: Routine reports.

White-crowned Sparrow: Routine reports.

Harris's Sparrow: Most depart the north and west by late Nov; one was tardy in *Scotts Bluff* 28 Nov (PRa, m. ob.).

White-throated Sparrow: Routine reports.

Vesper Sparrow: Routine reports.

LeConte's Sparrow: Routine reports.

Nelson's Sparrow: One at MWCW 26 Oct (KGo) was tardy.

Henslow's Sparrow: Routine reports.

Savannah Sparrow: Three in *Knox* 14 Aug (SQ) were early.

Song Sparrow: The 36 in *Hall* 19 Oct (JNi) was a good count. One at OR 27 Aug (SMl) suggests that a small breeding population may persist, although there have been few recent summer reports there.

Lincoln's Sparrow: One at OR 18 Aug (SMl) was early.

Swamp Sparrow: Routine reports.

Green-tailed Towhee: As many as six were at Exit 1, Interstate 80, *Kimball* 15-16 Sep (PR, LE).

Spotted Towhee: Although "pure" Spotted Towhees may appear in the hybrid/ntrogressant zone during the breeding season (see map at https://birds.outdoornebraska.gov/spotted-towhee/), documentation is requested. There were two such reports that, without documentation, are best considered introgressants and reported in eBird as "Spotted/Eastern Towhee": singles in *Buffalo* 9 Aug and *Greeley* 15 Aug. Note: for reporting purposes, Aug is considered part of the fall season.

Eastern Towhee: Following on from the discussion above under Spotted Towhee, there were two undocumented reports of Eastern Towhee westerly in the hybrid/introgressant zone (see map at https://birds.outdoornebraska.gov/eastern-towhee/) that without documentation should be considered introgressants and reported in eBird as "Spotted/Eastern Towhee": singles in *Chase* 8 Sep and *Hitchcock* 15 Sep.

Yellow-breasted Chat: Routine reports.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Routine reports.

Bobolink: Routine reports.

Eastern Meadowlark: Routine reports.

Western Meadowlark: Routine reports.

Orchard Oriole: Routine reports.

Bullock's Oriole: Two apparent non-introgressants were easterly in the LM area 10 Aug (SMl).

Baltimore Oriole: Routine reports.

Red-winged Blackbird: Routine reports.

Brown-headed Cowbird: The 2000 at Shickley, *Fillmore* 18 Sep (KGo) was a good count. An adult Northern Cardinal feeding a cowbird fledgling in Omaha, *Douglas* 1 Sep (JWH). was rather late.

Rusty Blackbird: Routine reports.

Brewer's Blackbird: Two in *Antelope* 20 Nov (MB) were late for the north.

Common Grackle: Routine reports.

Great-tailed Grackle: Routine reports.

Ovenbird: Routine reports.

Louisiana Waterthrush: Routine reports.

Northern Waterthrush: Routine reports.

Golden-winged Warbler: Less than annual in fall, there were three reports of this species that appears to be increasing in numbers. Singles were in a Papillion, *Sarpy* yard 31 Aug (PS), and a Bellevue, *Sarpy* yard 4–5 Sep and 24 Sep (L&BP). The latter is 2nd latest on record of the 36 total fall records, nine of which are for 2016-2019.

Blue-winged Warbler: The only report was of one photographed at WP 1 Sep (JGJ), the observer's "first in over 20 years". Reports have declined in the last 3-4 years as those of Golden-winged have increased, but the reasons are complex and unclear and genetic studies in areas where the ranges of the two species overlap appear to predict the opposite (https://birds.outdoornebraska.gov/golden-winged-warbler/). Another was reported in *Lancaster* 10 Sep, but details were considered equivocal.

Black-and-white Warbler: One at Cottonmill Park, *Buffalo* 8 Aug (BBr) was early.

Prothonotary Warbler: The only report of this less-than-annual fall migrant was of one in a Bellevue, *Sarpy* yard 12 Sep (L&BP).

Tennessee Warbler: Routine reports.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Arrival was early in the west, with one at OR 18 Aug (SMl). Quite late was one at Forest Lawn Cemetery, *Douglas* 20 Nov (AG, NR).

Nashville Warbler: One at OR 18 Aug (SMl) was early; it and one in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 24 Aug (SMl) were the 22nd and 23rd for fall in the Panhandle.

Virginia's Warbler: The 7th fall record, 13th overall, was of one in West Ash Canyon, *Dawes* 25 Aug (SMl). The seven fall records are all during 25 Aug-4 Sep in the Panhandle.

Connecticut Warbler: There are only four documented fall records for the state out of around 45 reports in all; a description of one at FF 1 Sep was equivocal. Photos and/or recordings are needed for such reports.

MacGillivray's Warbler: Routine reports.

Mourning Warbler: One in Omaha, *Douglas* 21 Aug (JR) was early. An immature female photographed at Sutherland Reservoir, *Lincoln* 2 Sep (SMl, eBird.org) was only the 5th documented fall record away from the east.

Kentucky Warbler: Routine reports.

Common Yellowthroat: One at HL 24 Nov (KS) was very late. The 37 at OR 1 Sep (SMl) was a good count.

Hooded Warbler: Only the 7th fall record of this less-than-annual statewide fall visitor was of one at Rock Creek SRA, *Dundy* 14 Sep (SMl, DE).

American Redstart: An early migrant was in *Colfax* 3 Aug (CDy), where breeding is unknown. The 12 in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux* 24 Aug (SMl) was a good count.

Cape May Warbler: Only the 4th all-time record for fall was a male in Omaha, *Douglas* 24 Aug (JR). This species migrates in the eastern US in fall.

Northern Parula: One at SCP 7 Oct (JSS) was late.

Magnolia Warbler: Routine reports.

Bay-breasted Warbler: Routine reports.

Blackburnian Warbler: One in *Scotts Bluff* 6 Oct (KD) was late; surprisingly, of 23 total records away from the east, 12 are in the Panhandle.

Yellow Warbler: Routine reports.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: One near Bushnell, *Kimball* 3 Sep (JGJ) was the 9th overall record for the Panhandle.

Blackpoll Warbler: Less than annual in fall, only the 9th documented fall record was one at Schramm Park SRA, *Sarpy* 2 Sep (SKr photo).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: There were two reports of this less-than-annual fall migrant: singles were in Towl Park, *Douglas* 7 Sep (MJo) and at LSWNP 25 Sep (SBr).

Palm Warbler: Rare in fall, the two reports were of singles at MWCW, on 28 Sep (MW) and 8 Oct (LE).

Pine Warbler: Rare in fall but occurring statewide, one was late at LM 17 Nov (SMl).

Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler: One at Scottsbluff, *Scotts Bluff* 4 Nov (TJe) was late for the west.

Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler: Routine reports.

Yellow-throated Warbler: Rarely reported in Aug, one was at Schramm Park SRA, *Sarpy* 7 Aug (BBr).

Townsend's Warbler: Routine reports.

Black-throated Green Warbler: Rare in the central in fall, two were at Cottonmill Park, *Buffalo* 26 Aug (JNi), one was there 10 Sep (JNi), and one was south of Kearney, *Buffalo* 6 Sep (AF).

Canada Warbler: This fall saw a perhaps unprecedented influx of the supposedly "rare" Canada Warbler. In 2016, 11 reports, involving a total of 14 birds, was considered an "amazing showing", but this fall there were **33** reports involving a total of **35** individuals. And, to boot, one in *Dakota* 12 Oct (BFH) was record late.

Wilson's Warbler: Routine reports.

Summer Tanager: Two at Verdigre, *Knox* 11 Aug (MB, EBr, DH) were northerly.

Scarlet Tanager: Routine reports.

Western Tanager: Routine reports.

Northern Cardinal: One in *McPherson* 19 Aug (NP) was west of the expected Sandhills summer range. An adult feeding a fledgling was quite late but not unprecedented at the same location in *Dixon* 31 Oct (JJ).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Less than annual in fall in the Panhandle, one was at Harrison, *Sioux* 24 Aug (SMl).

Black-headed Grosbeak: Routine reports.

Blue Grosbeak: Routine reports.

Lazuli Bunting: Routine reports.

Indigo Bunting: Good counts were the 11 at BOL 7 Aug (TG) and 10 at WP 8 and 9 Aug (TH).

Dickcissel: One in *Kimball* 16 Sep (LE) was tardy there. The 35 in *Seward* 23 Aug (LE) was a good fall count.

2019 Hitchcock Raptor Banding Project in Perspective

Jerry Toll
2741 Wyoming
Omaha NE 68112
jertol48@cox.net

Hitchcock Nature Center in Pottawattamie County, north of Crescent, Iowa, is home to the Hitchcock HawkWatch and Raptor Banding Project. The Nature Center is in the heart of the Loess Hills which, together with the flat expanse of the Missouri River Valley to the west, provides the perfect conditions for creating the updraft that aids migrating birds. The Hawkwatch began in 1992, and every fall from September through December, birds-of-prey enthusiasts gather on the 45-foot observation tower

to watch and count thousands of eagles, hawks, and other raptors as they migrate south. Every year since 2007, Sandy Reinken and I have banded raptors at Hitchcock, and each of the 13 seasons has had unusual situations and challenges. The fall of 2019 was no exception.

Diurnal Raptor Banding

On 6 September, opening day, we banded a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), but the September weather was often too hot and/or rainy to safely lure with Rock Pigeons and House Sparrows. For the next 12 days only 4 raptors were captured. Of those captured, one Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) was big boned, and although its weight was in the normal range, it required a #8 band. I did not have a #8 at the banding station that day, consequently measurements were taken but it was not banded. The first time we had had a Red-tailed Hawk large enough to need a #8 band was in the 2018 season. On 19 September migration began in earnest and the volume continued routinely through 2 November.

Broad-winged Hawk banded at Hitchcock Nature Center in 2019.

Red-tailed Hawks (N=121), Cooper's Hawks (N=14), and Sharp-shinned Hawks (*Accipiter striatus*) (N=12), are bread-and-butter species at the banding station, so it is especially pleasing when another raptor species is captured. On 20 September, an after-second-year Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) was banded when a small kettle of Broad-winged Hawks lifted up nearby. A second adult Broad-winged Hawk was banded on 24 September. We do not often capture Broad-winged Hawks

at Hitchcock. Only 11 had been captured in previous seasons, including 8 in the last 5 seasons.

On 21 September, the first of two Merlins (*Falco columbarius*) was banded. The second one was captured the next day. It was especially satisfying since we had not banded a single Merlin during the previous 2018 season. Both were hatch-year Merlins, one female and the other male, and both were of the *F. c. columbarius* subspecies. Merlins have been banded in 9 of our 13 seasons.

On 22 September, a hatch-year Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) was the first raptor of the day to be banded. A Red-shouldered Hawk has been banded each of the last 4 years at Hitchcock. The only other record occurred in 2012 when 2 were banded.

Merlin banded at Hitchcock Nature Center in 2019.

On 23 September, an after-hatch-year male American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) was banded, the first of two. The second, on 26 October, was also male but a hatch-year. Not many kestrels are banded at Hitchcock. In previous years only about half the seasons had kestrel captures and only a total of 7 have been captured. They seem to spend less time migrating through the wooded Loess Hills, perhaps preferring open country in the Missouri River Valley. The ones that do are rarely captured. They may come in for a look and sit on a perch but are soon hawking grasshoppers and other insects and ignore the European Starling lure. House Sparrows

were used this year, which may account, in part, for our success in attracting American Kestrels.

The first of two Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) captures occurred on 24 September late in the day. The second Peregrine Falcon was banded 29 September and had an unusual plumage that made it difficult to age. It had not completed its molting by migration, which is atypical, and was showing streaks of old, worn feathers alternating with streaks of new, fresh feathers over much of its body and wings. It was aged as a second year because the breast had both streaking (hatch year) and barring (adult) feather patterns. Both were determined to be of the *F. p. tundrius* subspecies due to the narrow malar mark and tawny forehead (Wheeler 2003).

While September can have the most diversity of species, the last half of October can have the biggest surprises. On 22 October near closing time, a male hatch-year Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) made a surprise visit. It was only the third Northern Goshawk ever banded at Hitchcock.

Peregrine Falcon banded at Hitchcock Nature Center in 2019.

On Halloween, 31 October, we had another surprise. I was distracted away from watching the lure when I heard a whooshing of wings. I looked up and a large raptor had come low over the blind from behind and was speeding for the lure pigeon. It was a large falcon! It hit the pigeon but could not maintain its grasp and landed on the other side of the pigeon away from the blind. It immediately returned and captured

the pigeon, and I in turn captured the falcon. I approached the falcon in the bownet and examined it quizzically while removing it because the plumage and size just didn't fit that of a Peregrine, which I had expected. Briefly I considered Prairie Falcon. No again. It wasn't until I entered the blind with the falcon in hand that I even considered the possibility that it could be a Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*). I was by myself and had my hands full. It did not appreciate the turn of events in the same way I did and was ear-splittingly telling me so and trying to bite my hands. I knew that this could well turn out to be a state record so I needed to proceed cautiously and get my extreme excitement under control. Raptors in hand respond favorably to a calm handler and for the sake of the falcon, we needed to work together to get through the process calmly. In the banding process, an appropriately sized open-ended can is used

Jerry Toll with Gyrfalcon captured at Hitchcock Nature Center in 2019. Photo by Jenny Janes.

to confine and calm the bird during weighing and fitting the band on the tarsus. Having the bird in the can also gave me time to compare the morphometric parameters of Gyrfalcons (Pyle 2008) with the bird in hand. I notified the hawkwatchers on the tower of the situation and requested a member to come and take photos. The falcon calmed, I calmed, and the banding process went smoothly. The band size, wing chord,

Figure 1. Raptors banded at the Hitchcock Nature Center in 2019. HY= hatch year; SY = second year; ASY = after second year; TY = third year; AHY = after hatch year; 4Y = fourth year; unk = unknown sex.

SPECIES	#	age-HY	age-SY	age-ASY	age-TY	age-AHY	age-4Y	% HY	Female	Male	unk
Sharp-shinned Hawk	12	6	2	4				50%	10	2	
Cooper's Hawk	14	4		10				29%	4	10	
Northern Goshawk	1	1								1	
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	1									1
Broad-winged Hawk	2					2					2
Red-tailed Hawk	121	71	17	31	1	1		57%			121
American Kestrel	2	1				1				2	
Merlin	2	2							1	1	
Peregrine Falcon	2	1	1						2		
Gyrfalcon	1	1							1		
Total Diurnal Raptors	**158**	**88**	**20**	**45**	**1**	**4**			**18**	**16**	**124**
N. Saw-whet Owl	29	19	2	7			1	66%	23	3	3
TOTAL RAPTORS	**187**	**107**	**22**	**52**	**1**	**4**	**1**		**41**	**19**	**127**

length of tail and plumage aspects all fit those of a female, gray morph, hatch-year Gyrfalcon. She remained quiet through the banding process and during the wait for Jenny James to arrive to take photos. When she was taken outside for photos and to be released, she made it clear that she was ready to be away from humans. Documentation was submitted to the Iowa Records Committee and accepted (#2019-33). Sightings of Gyrfalcon have occurred three times previously at the Hitchcock HawkWatch but only one submitted record was accepted by the Iowa Records Committee. It occurred on 11 November 2014 (#2014-51). A check of previous

documentation submitted to the Records Committee for this species found a total of 30 records on file of which 13 were accepted (Iowa Records Committee 2020). The oldest accepted record was dated 27 March 1992 (#1992-33) (Bolduan 1994; Kent and Putney 2014).

Ten species of raptors were banded during the fall 2019 season, 4 of which were falcons, which was a new record. The next highest diversity of species banded occurred in 2012 when 9 species were banded, 4 of which were again falcons. They were Peregrine, Prairie, Merlin and American Kestrel. All told, 158 diurnal raptors were banded in the fall of 2019. (See Figure 1.)

Red-tailed Hawks are our most common species at Hitchcock, and 121 Red-tails were banded in 2019, barely edging out the 120 caught in the 2009 season and the 118 in 2015. Diversity of subspecies was apparent as 19% (N=23) of the total Red-tailed Hawks were Harlan's (*B. j. harlani*) and 17% (N=21) of the total were western (*B. j. calurus*). There were 4 Krider's of the *B. j. borealis* (eastern) subspecies, all of them hatch-years. Interestingly, in the past 5 seasons, all 15 Krider's captured were hatch-year. Going back 10 years, only 3 of 33 Krider's were older. The remaining 73 Red-tailed Hawks were mostly *B. j. borealis* although some of these had characteristics of the as yet unaccepted subspecies *B. j. abieticola* (Liguori and Sullivan 2014). Separating Red-tailed Hawks to subspecies is challenging in the field, but it is equally challenging in the hand. Even though the characteristics are there to see, often the bird has plumage characteristics of two or more subspecies. The above categories include those birds that had shared plumage characteristics, but I classified them in the predominant category. There were 3 classified as unknown, that is, there were plumage characteristics from at least 3 subspecies and no one set of characteristics predominated. One of these Red-tailed Hawks had characteristics of 3 subspecies and those of *B. j. abieticola*, which were the plumage characteristics that predominated.

Two Red-tailed Hawks were encountered that had been previously banded, only the second and third time that this has occurred with a diurnal raptor at Hitchcock Banding Station. The first encounter, on 29 September, was with a hatch-year that had been rehabilitated by Raptor Recovery Nebraska and released at its capture site in downtown Omaha on 14 September 2019. The second encounter, on 23 October, was with a hatch-year that had been previously banded 4 October 2019 2 miles west of Preparation Canyon State Park in Monona County, Iowa.

On 24 October, a second-year Red-tailed Hawk was captured that was missing its right foot. The wound was mostly healed and did not appeared to have swelling. One can only speculate how it came to lose its foot and how it survived the wound and the subsequent healing process. It had an adequate fat score, energy, weight, and muscle mass so it was banded and released.

Sharp-shinned Hawks dropped to a new record low of only 12 captured. The 12 year mean and average is 29 captured. By comparison, the Hitchcock HawkWatch had its lowest tally of Sharp-shinned Hawks in 2019, counting only 219. They have

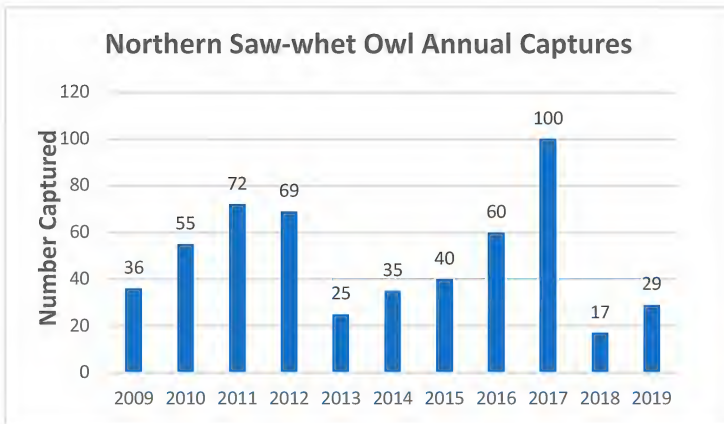
been seeing a decline since 2014 and the 18-year mean of the HawkWatch is 937 Sharp-shinned Hawks.

Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding

The Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) banding season began 12 October and ended 24 November. The first capture occurred on the evening of 19 October. Five mist nets, 9 meters long x 2.6 meters high with a 60mm mesh size were arranged in an L-shaped pattern on a ridge line near the eastern border of Hitchcock Nature Center. An audiolure played a continuous recording of the male breeding call to attract the Saw-whet Owls to the nets for capture and banding. The crew attempted to band 4 evenings (sessions) per week, weather and conditions permitting, consisting of 5 net checks with a 45-minute interval between checks. The Saw-whet Owl banding season ends after 15 November when there are 3 consecutive sessions with no new captures.

Only 29 Saw-whet Owls were banded during fall migration in 2019. This is well below the 100 banded in 2017 and the 69 and 72 banded in 2012 and 2011, respectively. It was well above the low years of 2018 and 2013, when only 17 and 25, respectively, were banded. Thus annual migratory densities at Hitchcock appear to follow a 5-year cycle, in contrast to the 4-year cycle at east coast banding stations documented by Whalen and Watts (2002) and the 6-year cycle in Manitoba (De Ruyck 2009). However, neither study covered more than a single cycle and banding

Figure 2. Northern Saw-whet Owls captured at Hitchcock Nature Center 2009-2019.



stations each have variables that affect the capture rate. Prevailing wind direction and intensity and timing of the lunar cycle during the migration period (Murphy 2016) are among the factors that affect the capture rate. I would add that Hitchcock initiates banding 15 minutes after sunset and ceases operations on average about 3 ½ hours later, but some banding stations around the continent are open for longer hours or even for the entire night. A total of 92 hours over 26 evenings was spent banding Northern Saw-whet Owls at Hitchcock Nature Center in the fall of 2019. As with most phenomena concerning the migration of Northern Saw-whet Owls, the apparent differences in the length of migratory density cycles mentioned above are not well understood. Further long-term studies comparing multi-regional locations are needed on these topics.

Of the 29 Saw-whet Owls captured, 66 % (N=19) were hatch-year. I would expect to see a higher percentage of hatch-year birds in a recovery year, and the same trend did occur in 2014 with 57% (N=20). One of those captured had been previously banded. Based on the wing molt pattern of inner primaries and secondaries being old and the outer primaries and secondaries being new (Pyle 1997), the owl was aged at the time to be a second-year bird. The Bird Banding Laboratory notified us that the owl had been banded by Hawkridge Bird Observatory, Duluth, MN, on 8 October 2016 as being hatched in 2016. This revelation made the bird actually a fourth-year owl. The discrepancy between what was observed and the actual age of the owl created confusion about the quality of our practice ageing Northern Saw-whet Owls….for about a week. Then a new article came out on a long-term, large sampling size study of recaptured Saw-whets that compared the molt pattern of owls in hand to their known hatch-year. They found that the four-year pattern resembles the second-year pattern and hypothesized that subsequent molts, as they age, alternate with resembling the second-year and third-year patterns and grow increasingly more varied with age (Mackentley 2019).

Acknowledgements

Since the inception of the HawkWatch, the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board and staff have seen the long-term value of having first the HawkWatch and the Raptor Banding Project at Hitchcock. Their continued support, both organizationally and financially, has been crucial to the advancement of raptor migration monitoring and protection in Iowa. Sandy Reinken each year uses vacation time so that she can band raptors during the day and enables us to cover the diurnal banding station 7 days per week during the 2-month season. Thank you, Sandy! The Audubon Society of Omaha has adopted Hitchcock Nature Center and provided funding assistance for the Saw-whet Owl banding, and many Audubon members (including me) have volunteered their time. Jason McMeen's contribution made it possible for me to attend the annual Raptor Research Foundation conference in November and obtain critical information on current raptor topics. We have been fortunate to have a group of dedicated volunteers for the past 2 seasons including

Abbe Richardson, Kris Hammond, Kellie Hayden, Steve Schmitt, Scott Bradley, Mary Clausen, Karen Kutz Smith, Kadyn Hatfield, Dorie Stone, and Alyssa Wolken. Thank you all!

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Imperial Fall Field Days

by Janis Paseka

The 2019 NOU Fall Field Days were held in Imperial, Chase County, on September 13 - 15, with 59 registered.

Field trips were led by Mark Brogie, Bill Flack, and T. J. Walker to the Wauneta cemetery, Frenchman WMA, Hayes Center WMA, Enders Reservoir WMA and SRA, Champion Mill Lake, Swinging Bridge Arboretum, Church Grove Recreation Area, Rock Creek Lake SRA and Fish Hatchery, and Swanson Reservoir SRA and WMA.

Among the highlights were Osprey, which were seen at several locations, Sabine's Gull, Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Red-naped Sapsucker, Merlin, and Prairie Falcon.

Anita Breckbill, Doctor of Musical Arts, head of the Music Library at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, and NOU Librarian, was our speaker on Friday evening. The title of her presentation was "For the Birds: Messiaen and Bird Song Transcription".

Olivier Messiaen, 1908-1992, was a French composer and organist whose compositions were heavily influenced by bird song. He transcribed and incorporated bird song into his compositions, often altering them slightly, or, as Anita put it, "covering" the songs to suit his purposes. He would imitate songs of birds, but accuracy was not the point. Messiaen was also influenced by prime numbers and would change a bird song to include prime numbers. He also said he saw colors when he heard certain musical notes, a type of synesthesia. His transcriptions of bird songs fill seven volumes. A highlight of the presentation was when Anita, an accomplished flutist herself, played some of his bird song transcriptions for us.

Our Saturday evening speaker was lifelong birder John Vanderpoel, owner of Peregrine Video Productions and the creator of The Advanced Birding Video Series with Jon Dunn. In 2011, he did a big year and now holds the second highest ABA-area year list (744 species). His chase took him over 120,000 miles in 299 days, squeezed in around family and work. During his chase, he also raised money for Citizens for Conservation, a volunteer-based nonprofit dedicated to the preservation of the natural environment in Illinois. He described searching for a Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Florida, a Hooded Crane in Tennessee, a Little Egret in Scarborough Marsh in Maine, a Gray-hooded Gull in New York, a Whiskered Auklet near Adak, Alaska, and a Nutting's Flycatcher in Arizona. Details of his quest are in his book, *Full Chase Mode*.

NOU Fall Meeting - Imperial

	Chase	Dundy	Hayes	Hitchcock	Perkins
Canada Goose	x	x			
Wood Duck	x	x	x	x	
Blue-winged Teal	x	x			x
Northern Shoveler		x			x
Mallard	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Pintail		x			
Redhead	x				
Northern Bobwhite	x			x	
Ring-necked Pheasant	x	x	x	x	
Wild Turkey	x	x	x	x	
Pied-billed Grebe	x	x	x	x	
Western Grebe	x			x	
Rock Pigeon	x	x	x	x	x
Eurasian Collared-Dove	x	x	x	x	x
White-winged Dove	x	x			
Mourning Dove	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-billed Cuckoo			x	x	
Common Nighthawk	x				
Common Poorwill	x				
Chimney Swift	x	x		x	
American Coot	x				
American Avocet				x	
Killdeer	x	x	x	x	x
Semipalmated Plover	x				
Stilt Sandpiper					x
Sanderling	x			x	
Baird's Sandpiper	x				x
Least Sandpiper					x
Pectoral Sandpiper					x
Semipalmated Sandpiper					x
Western Sandpiper	x				
Long-billed Dowitcher					x
Wilson's Snipe	x				
Spotted Sandpiper	x	x		x	
Solitary Sandpiper	x				x
Lesser Yellowlegs					x

NOU Fall Meeting - Imperial

	Chase	Dundy	Hayes	Hitchcock	Perkins
Greater Yellowlegs	x				x
Wilson's Phalarope		x			x
Sabine's Gull	x			x	
Franklin's Gull	x			x	
Ring-billed Gull	x			x	
Common Tern	x			x	
Forster's Tern				x	
Double-crested Cormorant				x	
American White Pelican	x		x		
Great Blue Heron	x	x	x	x	
Turkey Vulture	x	x	x	x	
Osprey	x	x	x	x	
Northern Harrier	x				
Sharp-shinned Hawk	x				
Cooper's Hawk	x				
Bald Eagle	x				
Swainson's Hawk	x	x		x	x
Red-tailed Hawk	x	x	x	x	
Ferruginous Hawk	x				
Eastern Screech-Owl	x				
Great Horned Owl	x	x	x		
Burrowing Owl	x				
Belted Kingfisher	x	x	x		
Red-headed Woodpecker	x	x	x	x	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	x		x	x	
Red-naped Sapsucker				x	
Downy Woodpecker	x	x	x	x	
Hairy Woodpecker	x	x	x	x	
Northern Flicker	x	x	x	x	
American Kestrel	x	x	x	x	
Merlin				x	
Peregrine Falcon	x				
Prairie Falcon		x			
Western Wood-Pewee		x			
Eastern Wood-Pewee				x	
Least Flycatcher			x		

NOU Fall Meeting - Imperial

	Chase	Dundy	Hayes	Hitchcock	Perkins
Eastern Phoebe	x	x	x	x	
Say's Phoebe	x	x		x	
Western Kingbird	x	x			
Eastern Kingbird		x			
Loggerhead Shrike					x
Bell's Vireo				x	
Warbling Vireo	x	x	x	x	
Red-eyed Vireo	x	x			
Blue Jay	x	x	x	x	
American Crow	x		x	x	
Horned Lark	x	x	x	x	
Tree Swallow		x			
Barn Swallow	x	x		x	x
Cliff Swallow				x	
Black-capped Chickadee	x			x	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	x				
White-breasted Nuthatch	x		x	x	
Rock Wren	x				
House Wren	x	x	x	x	
Marsh Wren		x			
Carolina Wren	x				
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	x				
Eastern Bluebird	x		x		
Townsend's Solitaire		x	x		
Swainson's Thrush	x			x	
American Robin	x	x	x	x	
Gray Catbird	x				
Brown Thrasher	x	x			
European Starling	x	x	x	x	x
Cedar Waxwing	x	x			
House Sparrow	x	x	x	x	
American Pipit		x			
Sprague's Pipit	x				
House Finch	x	x	x	x	
Pine Siskin			x		
American Goldfinch	x	x	x	x	

NOU Fall Meeting - Imperial

	Chase	Dundy	Hayes	Hitchcock	Perkins
Grasshopper Sparrow	x	x			
Lark Sparrow	x	x	x		
Lark Bunting	x	x		x	x
Chipping Sparrow	x		x	x	
Clay-colored Sparrow	x	x		x	
Field Sparrow	x	x		x	
Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)		x			
White-crowned Sparrow		x			
Vesper Sparrow	x	x	x	x	
Song Sparrow		x			
Lincoln's Sparrow	x	x		x	
Towhee sp				x	
Yellow-breasted Chat	x	x			
Yellow-headed Blackbird	x	x			
Western Meadowlark	x	x	x	x	
Meadowlark sp	x	x			
Orchard Oriole	x				
Baltimore Oriole	x				
Red-winged Blackbird	x				
Brown-headed Cowbird	x	x	x		
Brewer's Blackbird					x
Common Grackle	x				
Great-tailed Grackle	x				x
Orange-crowned Warbler	x	x		x	
Common Yellowthroat	x	x			
American Redstart	x				
Yellow Warbler	x	x			
Yellow-rumped Warbler	x	x			
Wilson's Warbler	x	x	x	x	
Western Tanager	x				
Northern Cardinal	x	x	x	x	
Blue Grosbeak	x	x			
Indigo Bunting	x				
Dickcissel	x				
Total Species: 141	108	73	46	65	24

Index to Volume 87

Akers, Danny 108
Allen,
  Edward 108
  Susan 36
Alred, Chris 4, 44
Anderson,
  Brett 37
  Chris 4
Arcilla, Nicole 36, 114
Arendt, Barbara 75
Arey, Janice 44
Arthur, Noah 4, 44, 108
Aubushon, Cathy 36
Avocet, American 21, 43, 49, 67, 82, 124, 149
Awerbuch, Gavin 4

Barbaro, Carla 108
Babcock, Colleen 36
Badura, Laurel 109
Baker,
  Cody 36
  Kayla 120
Bargar, Jeff 65-66
Barta, Dina 75, 120
Bathke, Marc 37
Bauers, Dennis 36, 37, 44
Bawn, Susan 75
Beard, Collen 37
Becker, Wendy 4, 37, 44, 108, 120
Bedows, Elliott 4, 36, 37, 108
Beisel,
  Keegan 37
  Matt 4, 36, 37, 75, 108
Bents, Eric 4, 120
Bentzinger, Ruth 36
Bernson, Blair 120
Beyer, Dylan 44, 120
Binder, Emily 37
Bishop, A. A. 113
Bittern,
  American 21, 51, 68, 84, 126
  Least 51, 84, 126
Blackbird,
  Brewer's 14, 35, 59, 94 , 136, 152
  Red-winged 14, 15, 25, 34-35, 59, 63, 70, 94, 136, 152
  Rusty 14, 34-35, 59, 136
  Yellow-headed 13, 35, 58, 70, 93, 136, 152
Bluebird,
  Eastern 11-12, 20, 25, 32-33, 55, 69, 90, 133, 151
  Mountain 12, 32-33, 55, 90, 133
  Western 107
Bobolink 58, 63, 70, 93, 136
Bobwhite, Northern 7, 26-27, 47, 67, 74, 79, 123, 149
Bolduan, B. 147
Bonfiglio, Susan 4
Bornemeier, Andrea 37
Bouma, Judy 36
Boundy, Timothy 44
Bradley, Scott 4, 36, 37, 44, 108, 120, 147
Brant 119, 122
Branta bernicla hrota 122
Breckbill, Anita 37, 66, 148
Brie, J. 113
Brenner, Stephen 4, 36, 44, 66, 75, 120
Brewer, Thomas 62
Bridgham, Charles B. 120
Bright, Duane 44
Brogie,
  Ed M. 4, 37, 44, 75, 108, 120
  Lee 4, 44, 75, 120
  Mark 44, 66, 75, 96-109, 108, 120, 148
Brott,
  Eugene 36
  Norma 36
Brown,
  Barbara 44, 75, 108, 120
  Linda 37
  Mary Bomberger 4, 36, 37, 114
  Monte 37
  Myrna 36
Bruen-Morningstar, Iza 44
Bubo virginianus
  pallescens 85
  subarcticus 9, 85
  virginianus 10
Budde, Sandy 4
Bufflehead 6, 27, 47, 122
Bunting,
  Indigo 61, 70, 95, 138, 152
  Lark 57, 92, 135, 152
  Lazuli 61, 65, 70, 95, 138
  Lazuli x Indigo 95
  Lazuli/Indigo 95

Index to Volume 87

Bunting, continued
Painted 43, 61
Snow 13, 33, 42, 56, 118, 135
Burgess, Tom 44
Burns, K. J. 109
Burt, Peyton 37
Buskirk, William 120
Buss, Scott 4, 44
Buteo jamaicensis
abieticola 9, 119, 128, 129, 144
borealis 9, 128, 144
calurus 9, 129, 144
harlani 9, 129, 144

Cade, Jan 37
Carlson, Pat 36
Campagna, Amy 36
Canvasback 6, 27, 47, 74, 77-78, 122
Carborelle,
Julianne 36
Peter 36
Cardinal, Northern 14, 34-35, 61, 70, 95, 118, 138, 152
Carlini, John 21, 36, 44, 59, 65, 108, 120
Carrico, Beverly 75
Carroll, Kathy 108
Carver, Cameron 108
Caspers, Glenn 44
Catharus
guttatus
faxoni 55, 133
auduboni 133
ustulatus
swainsoni 91
ustulatus 91
Caven, Andrew 36, 110-114
Catbird, Gray 12, 25, 32-33, 55, 69, 91, 133, 151
Chat, Yellow-breasted 42, 58, 65, 70, 93, 136, 152
Eastern subspecies 42
Chesser, R. T. 109
Chessick, Cheryl 44
Chickadee,
Black-capped 3, 10-11, 32-33, 54, 69, 89, 132, 151
Carolina 11
Mountain 11, 25, 33, 54, 103, 132
Childers, Colleen 36, 44, 75, 108
Christipher, Leslie 4
Chukar 47, 79
Chuck-will's-widow 42, 48, 65, 66, 67, 80, 123
Cicero, C. 109
Clark,
Dan 75
Matt 4
Virginia 4, 37, 44
Clausen, Mary 4, 37, 108, 147
Cole,
Chyanne 37
Pat 37
Colwell, M. A. 113, 114
Compson, Morgan 37
Coot, American 8, 28-29, 49, 67, 82, 124, 149
Corman,
Jen 4, 44, 75
Kelly 4, 44, 75
Cormorant,
Double-crested 3, 8, 28-29, 51, 68, 84, 126, 150
Neotropic 51, 84, 97, 126
Coues, Elliott 62
Cowbird, Brown-headed 14, 34-35, 59, 63, 70, 94, 136, 152
Crandell, Gay 36
Crane,
Sandhill 3, 8, 16, 28-29, 49, 82, 124
Whooping 49, 124
Crawford-Rose, Kathleen 120
Creeper, Brown 11, 32-33, 54, 90, 132
Crews, Craig 18, 24
Croft, Colin 4, 44, 48, 54, 75, 82, 108
Croshaw, Charlotte 4, 36, 44, 75
Crossbill,
Red 3, 12, 33, 42, 56, 91, 118, 119, 134
Ponderosa Pine Type 2 134
Douglas Fir Type 4 119, 134
White-winged 103-104, 107, 119, 134
Crow, American 10, 32-33, 54, 69, 89, 132, 151
Cuckoo,
Black-billed 42, 48, 80, 123
Yellow-billed 48, 67, 80, 123, 149

Index to Volume 87

Cummins, Vern 37
Curlew, Long-billed 21, 49, 82, 124
Currier, P. J. 114
Curtis, Tony 36

Daenzer,
  Bonnie 36
  Gil 36
Dague, Amanda 36
Dalby, L. 114
Darnold, Lauren A. 75
DaRugna, Olivia 4, 44, 120
Dather, Allyson 4, 44
Dawson, Jeff 120
DeBoer, Jerry 44
Deeds, Linda 4
DeLara, Kathy 4, 36, 37, 44, 75, 120
Delucci, Carla 36
Denboske, Anita 44
Denny, Mary 37
De Ruyck, C. C. 147
DeStefano, Johanna 113
DiBernard, Barbara 37
Dickcissel 61, 70, 95, 138, 152
Dickerson, Cheryl 36
Dietrich, Roger 4, 120
Dinan
  Kenny 36
  Lauren 36
Dinsmore,
  Lena 37
  Stephen J. 4, 37
Dixon, Taylor 44
Dolezal, Frank 37
Dougherty, Paul 44, 75
Dove,
  Eurasian Collared- 3, 7, 28-29, 48, 67, 80, 123, 149
    "tangerine"-colored 48
  Inca 97
  Mourning 7, 28-29, 48, 67, 80, 123, 149
  White-winged 3, 7, 16, 18, 28-29, 48, 80, 123, 149
Dowitcher,
  Long-billed 50, 68, 83, 125, 149
  Short-billed 50, 68, 83, 125
Dowling, Todd 75
Dryobates villosus monticola 86

Ducey, James E. 44, 75, 120
Duck,
  American Black 6, 15, 26-27, 122
  Harlequin 100
  Long-tailed 6, 15, 26-27, 47, 122
  Mexican 119, 122
  Ring-necked 3, 6, 26-27, 47, 67, 74, 78, 118, 122
  Ruddy 7, 15, 23, 47, 67, 79, 123
  Tufted x Ring-necked 74, 78-79
  Wood 5, 26-27, 46, 67, 76, 122, 149
Dudley, Seth 44, 120
Duey,
  Ann 37
  Dave 37
Dunbar, Paul 4, 44, 120
Dunkle, Warren 37
Dunlin 50, 67, 83, 125
Dunn, J. L. 109
Dunning, Kathy Mihm 120
Dykstra, Curtis 120

Eagle,
  Bald 8, 16, 18, 30-31, 51, 68, 85, 98, 127, 150
  Golden 8, 28-29, 51, 85, 98, 127
Edwards,
  Boni 4, 19, 22, 36, 37, 44, 75, 87, 108, 120
  Kylee 36
Egret,
  Cattle 51, 68, 84, 118, 126
  Great 51, 84, 119, 126
  Reddish 101
  Snowy 51, 84, 126
Einemann, Larry 4, 36, 37, 44, 75, 108, 120
Ellis, Mike 44
Ellison, Kevin 44
Ellsworth, Daniel 44
Ely, Dave 4, 120
Elmberg, J. 114
Engle, D. M. 114
Estep, Susan 44
Etherton, Jim 36, 44
Evans, D. 147

Faas, Andrea 37
Fair, Shannon 44

Index to Volume 87

Falco
columbarius columbarius 10, 130, 140
peregrinus tundrius 141
Falcon,
Peregrine 10, 31, 52, 68, 74, 86, 130, 141, 143, 144, 150
Prairie 10, 25, 30-31, 52, 86, 130, 144, 148, 150
Falk, Laurence 36, 44
Falzgraf, Nelli 37
Faucher, Julianna 4
Ferguson, Doug 36
Ferring, Linda 36
Fields, Jeff 37
Finch,
Cassin's 12, 56, 134
House 12, 32-33, 56, 69, 91, 118, 134, 151
Purple 12, 32-33, 56, 118, 134
Finch, Debra 75
Fischer, Nick 36
Fishbein, Benita 44
Fitzgerald, Sean 75
Flack, William 4, 36, 37, 44, 65, 75, 108, 120, 148
Flexman, Jenny 44
Flicker, Northern 10, 30-31, 52, 68, 86, 130, 150
Red-shafted 86
Flohr, Rita 4, 19, 21, 44, 75, 108, 120
Flycatcher,
Acadian 53, 86, 131
Alder 53, 86, 131
Ash-throated 74, 87
Cordilleran 53, 87, 131
Dusky 74, 87, 131
Gray 102
Great Crested 69, 87, 131
Hammond's 43, 53, 131
Least 53, 69, 87, 131, 150
Olive-sided 42, 53, 68, 86, 130
Scissor-tailed 19, 53, 88, 131
Vermilion 102
Willow 53, 87, 131
Yellow-bellied 53, 86, 130
Forsyth, David 75
Fowler, Aurora 110-114
Fox, A. D. 114
Freeborn, Joe 18
Fruend, Jennifer 36
Fuchs, Samuel 75
Fuhlendorf, S. D. 114
Fuller, Ryan 44
Furman, Andrew 36, 44, 75, 108, 120

Gadwall 6, 26-27, 46, 67, 77, 122
Gallinule, Common 82, 102, 106, 118, 124
Gannon, Tom 4, 75, 108, 120
Geiser, Julie 37
Gentry,
Don 37
Meredyth 37
Gerten,
Kathi 36, 120
Robert 36, 44, 120
Gierke, Linda 36
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray 55, 69, 90, 133
western subspecies 90
Godwit,
Hudsonian 49, 67, 82, 119, 124
Marbled 49, 82, 125
Goldeneye,
Barrow's 6, 15, 27, 47
Common 6, 26-27, 47, 79, 123
Goldfinch,
American 3, 12, 20, 32-33, 56, 69, 91, 134, 151
Lesser 43, 56, 91, 108, 134
black-backed 91
green-backed 91, 108
Goldowitz, B. S. 114
Goldthwait, Mackenzie 120
Gooby, Katie 36, 37, 108, 120
Goose,
Barnacle 5
Cackling 26-27, 46, 76, 122
Canada 5, 26-27, 42, 46, 67, 76, 149
Greater White-fronted 5, 15, 26-27, 42, 46, 76, 121
Greylag 46
Pink-footed 5
Ross's 5, 26-27, 46, 76, 121
Snow 5, 26-27, 42, 46, 67, 76, 121
Goshawk, Northern 8, 51, 98, 108, 127, 141, 143

Index to Volume 87

Grackle,
Common 14, 34-35, 59, 70, 94, 136, 152
Great-tailed 14, 25, 34-35, 59, 70, 94, 136, 152
Grebe,
Clark's 3, 7, 29, 48, 80, 123
Eared 7, 48, 67, 74, 79, 118, 123
leucistic 19, 74
Horned 7, 29, 48, 79, 123
Pied-billed 7, 23, 28-29, 42, 48, 67, 79, 123, 149
Red-necked 7, 29
Western 7, 29, 48, 79, 123, 149
Green,
Brianna 37
Holly 37
Gremel,
Doug 36
Vikki 36
Grenon, Alan 4, 120
Griffin, Marie 120, 127
Griscom, Ludlow 62
Grosbeak,
Black-headed 61, 95, 138
Blue 61, 70, 95, 138, 152
Evening 103, 107, 134
Pine 107
Rose-breasted 61, 70, 95, 138
Rose-breasted-Black-headed hybrid 61
Grouse, Sharp-tailed 7, 16, 18, 43, 47, 79, 123
Grundman, Kimberly Hill 44
Gubanyi, Joe 10, 36, 37, 44, 65, 109
Gucciardo, Suzanne 36
Guild, Sue 37
Gull,
Bonaparte's 8, 28-29, 50, 125
California 8, 28-29, 50, 84, 125
interior 50
Franklin's 8, 50, 68, 83, 125, 150
Glaucous 8, 28-29, 126
Glaucous-winged
Great Black-backed 126
Herring 8, 28-29, 50, 84, 125
Iceland (Thayer's) 8, 28-29, 50, 126
Laughing 50, 83, 125
Gull, continued
Lesser Black-backed 8, 29, 50, 84, 126
Mew 8, 28-29, 50, 101, 125
Ring-billed 8, 28-29, 50, 83, 125, 150
Sabine's 125, 148, 150
Gust, Kyle 120
Gyrfalcon 142-144

Hack, Mace 44
Hajda, Tim 120
Haldermann, Pat 37
Hall,
Carolyn 44, 75
John W. 120
Rachel 4, 24, 108
Hamilton,
Luke 36, 37
R. 114
Hammond, Kris 147
Handley, Cortisa 36
Hansen, Knut 120
Hanson, Sylvia 36
Harding, Robin 36, 37, 44, 66, 75, 120
Harrier, Northern 8, 16, 28-29, 51, 68, 85, 98, 127, 150
Hartel, Greg 108
Hatfield,
Blake 36
Kadynn 36, 37, 44, 75, 108, 120, 147
Haugen, Matt 108
Hausmann, Bob 36
Hawk,
Broad-winged 51, 85, 98, 128, 139, 143
Cooper's 8, 16, 18, 28-29, 51, 68, 85, 98, 127, 139, 143, 150
Ferruginous 9, 30-31, 52, 85, 98, 129, 148, 150
Harris's 98, 119, 127, 128
Red-shouldered 3, 9, 16, 30-31, 43, 51, 85, 98, 128, 140, 143
Red-tailed 9, 16, 30-31, 51, 68, 85, 98, 119, 128, 129, 139, 143, 144, 150
Eastern 9, 52
Harlan's 9, 52

Index to Volume 87

Hawk, continued
Red-tailed Hawk, continued
Krider's 9, 51, 128, 144
leucistic 19
Northern 9
Western 9
Rough-legged 9, 16, 30-31, 52, 98, 129
Sharp-shinned 28-29, 51, 98, 127, 139, 143, 144, 150
Swainson's 8, 51, 68, 85, 98, 128, 150
Zone-tailed 98
Hayden, Kellie 147
Heckman, Alice 37
Hedge, Cloyce 44
Heidt, Dave 4, 36, 37, 44, 75, 120
Helzer,
Linda 37
Norm 37
Henszey, R. J. 114
Heron,
Great Blue 8, 16, 28-29, 51, 68, 84, 126, 150
Green 42, 51, 68, 74, 84, 126
Little Blue 21, 51, 84, 126
Herron, Billie 36
Hessel, R. 114
Hill, Terese 108
Hines, Tami 44
Hinkle, Carol 37
Hochstetler, Wayne 120
Holliday, Kevin 36
Hollst, Jane 36, 75
Hoppe,
Ian 108
Paula 36, 108, 120
Hothan, Boni Jo 4
Hughes, Virginia 36
Hummingbird,
Anna's 74, 81, 100-101
Broad-tailed 43, 48, 82, 124
Black-chinned 43, 48, 74, 80, 100, 106
Calliope 82, 124
Ruby-throated 24, 48, 67, 80, 124
Rufous 82, 124
Hunt, Anjolene 75
Hurt, Michele 75
Huser, Bill 37, 45, 75, 108, 120
Hutchins, Jay 45
Hutchinson, Zachariah 75

Ibis,
Glossy 51, 84
White-faced 42, 51, 68, 84, 118, 127
Icteria virens
auricollis 58
virens 42, 58

Jacobs, E. 147
Jaeger, Long-tailed 119, 125
Janes, Jennifer 37, 142-143
Jarvi,
Esa 23, 36, 37, 45, 75, 109, 120
Keith 37
Jay,
Canada 98
Blue 10, 25, 30-31, 54, 69, 88, 132, 151
Gray 98
Pinyon 3, 10, 42, 54, 88, 132
Steller's 10, 25, 31, 54, 103
Jehl, J. R. 113
Jensen, Todd 120
Johnsgard, Paul 37, 114
Johnson,
Allison 45
Gail 109
Heather 120
Jan 4, 17, 37, 45, 66, 75, 121
Jenny Jo 37, 45, 109
Michelle 37
Mike 45, 121
Jones,
Adam 36
Amber 36, 37
Jorgensen, Joel G. 4, 19, 22, 36, 37, 45, 66, 75, 109, 114, 121
Junco, Dark-eyed
Cassiar 13, 57, 135
Oregon 13, 34-35, 57, 135, 152
Pink-sided 3, 13, 34-35, 57, 135
Slate-colored 13, 34-35, 57, 135
White-winged 13, 57, 92, 135

Kader, Karen 4, 45, 109
Kalinay, Mary Ann 36

Index to Volume 87

Kantrud, H. A. 114
Kaufman, Kenn 63-64
Kaul, R. B. 114
Keeshan, Lynette 36, 75, 109
Keller, Joshua 121
Kenitz, Alice 37, 75
Kent, T. H. 147
Kerby, J. 114
Kestrel, American 10, 30-31, 52, 86, 130, 140-141, 143, 144, 150
Kibbe, Doug 121
Killdeer 8, 29, 49, 67, 82, 124, 149
Kim, Dan 121
King, Kelsey C. 110-114
Kingbird,
  Cassin's 53, 87, 131
  Eastern 53, 69, 88, 118, 131, 151
  Western 53, 69, 88, 131, 151
Kingfisher, Belted 9, 30-31, 52, 68, 86, 130, 150
Kinglet,
  Golden-crowned 11, 32-33, 55, 133
  Ruby-crowned 11, 32-33, 55, 133, 151
Kistler, Ethan 75
Kite,
  Mississippi 51, 65, 68, 74, 85, 98, 118, 127-128
  Swallow-tailed 98
  White-tailed 98
Kittiwake, Black-legged 106, 125
Kjellander, Carla 45
Klaphake,
  Bette 36
  Clem 11, 17, 36, 37, 45, 75, 109
Klug, Paige 45
Knott, Tim 37
Koepke, Jerry 36
Korpi, Ray 75
Korver, Maria 37
Koth, Landon 4, 45, 109
Kovanda,
  Jim 37
  Sandy 37
Krapu, G. L. 114
Kratter, A. W. 109
Kraus, Zoe 37
Krechmer, Kelly 121
Krieser,
  Kermit 36
  Mary 36
Krochuk, Billi 75
Kruse,
  Anne 36
  Ron 36
  Steve 36, 45, 75, 109, 121
Kuper, Catherine 37

Labedz, Thomas 4, 36, 37, 45
Lagasse, Ben 45
Lamphere, Steve 37
Lark, Horned 10, 32-33, 54, 69, 89, 132, 151
Larus californicus albertaensis 50
Leach, Pat 4
Leger, Daniel 36, 37, 45, 109
Lehmann,
  Alex 37
  Rachael 37
  Lehosky, Julius 37
Lemmon, Sandra 45, 109
Leonhardt, Dwain 37
Lessig, Arnold 45
Liguori, J. 147
Lingle, Gary 45
Locklear, Jim 45
Longspur,
  Chestnut-collared 56, 91, 134
  Lapland 13, 32-33, 56, 134
  McCown's 56, 91, 134
  Smith's 56, 134
Loon,
  Common 8, 29, 51, 84, 126
  Pacific 20, 126
  Red-throated 102, 106
  Yellow-billed 106
Lorentzen, Brad 36
Lovette, I. J. 109
Lowman, David 121
Lutter, Tucker 121

MacDonald, Garrett 45
Mackentley, N. 147
Magpie, Black-billed 3, 10, 25, 32-33, 42, 54, 89, 132
Mai, Mary 121

Index to Volume 87

Mallard 3, 6, 26-27, 47, 67, 77, 122, 149
Manning,
  Leanne 37
  John 37, 75
  Sam 4, 45, 75, 109, 121, 129
Mapes, Betty 4
Martin, Purple 54, 69, 89, 118, 132
Martindale, Steve 37
Mattson, Mike 36
Maunder, Fran 75, 121
McCartney, Connie 36
McCollough, Bob 37
McCown, Lynn 37
McDonald, Ryan 45
McDonnell Cassie 4
McDowell, Kathy 109
McKee, Debra 45
McKibben,
  Don 36
  LaQuita 36
McMeen, Jason 146
Meadowlark,
  Eastern 3, 13-14, 25, 34-35, 58, 70, 94, 136
  Western 14, 34-35, 58, 70, 94, 136, 152
Meester, Sharla 4, 45, 109, 121
Meigs, James 45
Mellberg, Bruce 37
Merganser,
  Common 3, 7, 15, 26-27, 47, 79, 123
  Hooded 6, 26-27, 47, 67, 79, 123
  Red-breasted 7, 26-27, 47, 123
Merlin 10, 30-31, 52, 86, 130, 140, 143, 144, 148, 150
  "Taiga" 130
Meyer, C. K. 114
Miller,
  Deb 18
  Holly 45
  R. 75
  Sam 75
Minchow,
  Ingrid 36
  Mark 36
Minor, Nick 45
Mlodinow, Steve 4, 45, 75, 93, 121
Mockingbird, Northern 12, 56, 69, 91, 134
Mollhoff, Wayne 4, 45, 61, 75, 114, 121
Monteith, Landon 37
Morris, Steve 5, 36, 45, 109, 121
Morton, Ruth 75
Murphy,
  H. K. 147
  John 36
  Kate 36

Newland, Patty 45
Nighthawk, Common 48, 66, 67, 80, 123, 149
Night-Heron,
  Black-crowned 51, 68, 84, 126
  Yellow-crowned 51, 84, 127
Nikkila, Jonathan 5, 36, 37, 45, 75, 109, 121
Nooker, Justin 76
Null, Jan 37
Nunez, Carrie 109
Nuthatch,
  Pygmy 11, 32-33, 54, 74, 90, 132
  Red-breasted 11, 25, 32-33, 54, 89, 118, 132, 151
  White-breasted 11, 32-33, 54, 69, 89, 132, 151
    Eastern 89
    Interior West 89
Nyffeler, Marsha 45, 76, 121

Ochsner, Jim 37, 45, 109
Ockander, Marli 36, 37
O'Keefe,
  Joseph 45, 76
  Seamus 37
Oligmueller, Scott 3
Ollinger, Linda 5
Olson, Chris 45
Oring, L. W. 113, 114
Oriole,
  Baltimore 14, 42, 59, 70, 94, 136, 152
  Bullock's 58, 94, 136
  Orchard 42, 58-59, 70, 94, 136, 152
Orr, Vicki 36
Osprey 51, 84-85, 127, 148, 150
Ostrom, Bethany 110-114
Ovenbird 59, 94, 136
Owl,
  Barn 52, 85, 129

Index to Volume 87

Owl, contiued
Barred 3, 9, 16, 30-31, 52, 68, 86, 129
Burrowing 52, 85, 129, 148, 150
Eastern Screech- 9, 30-31, 52, 85, 129, 150
Great Horned 9, 30-31, 52, 68, 85, 129, 150
Western Taiga 85
Long-eared 9, 30-31, 52, 86, 129
Northern Saw-whet 9, 42, 52, 86, 118, 130, 143, 145-146
Short-eared 9, 30-31, 52, 86, 130
Snowy 9, 16, 31, 52, 129

Padelford,
Babs 5, 19, 23, 37, 45, 76, 109, 121
Loren 5, 20, 22, 37, 45, 76, 109, 121
Pamperl, Anne 37
Panella, Melissa 5, 76
Partridge, Gray 3, 7, 42, 47, 79, 108, 123
Parula, Northern 60, 70, 94, 137
Paseka,
Don 5, 15, 36, 37, 45
Janis 5, 36, 37, 45, 65-66, 118
Rachel 37
Patterson, Shane 76, 121
Pelican, American White 8, 16, 19, 28-29, 42, 51, 68, 84, 126, 150
Pella, Theresa 37, 45, 76, 121, 128
Pendleton, Donald 45
Pennington, Whitney 121
Peters, James L. 62
Petersen, Jim 37
Peterson,
Brian 5, 20, 24, 36, 45, 109, 121
Brady 37
James 109
Jim 109
Roger Tory 63
Pfeifer, Sharon 45
Phalarope,
Red-necked 50, 83, 125
Wilson's 50, 68, 83, 110-114, 125, 150
Pheasant, Mark 45
Pheasant, Ring-necked 7, 26-27, 47, 67, 79, 123, 149
Phillips, Jack 36
Phoebe,
Eastern 53, 69, 87, 131, 151
Say's 53, 87, 131, 151
Picoides pubescens leucurus 130
Pieplow, Nathan 45, 121
Pierson, Andrew 5, 36, 45
Pigeon,
Band-tailed 101
Rock 7, 28-29, 48, 67, 80, 123, 139, 149
Pintail, Northern 6, 26-27, 47, 67, 77, 122, 149
Pipilo maculatus montanus 93
Pipit,
American 12, 25, 33, 56, 134, 151
Sprague's 56, 134, 151
Pittman, Galen 45
Plankis, Sue 109
Plock, Linda 37, 45
Plover,
American Golden- 49, 67, 82, 124
Black-bellied 49, 67, 82, 124
Mountain 49, 82, 124
Piping 49, 82, 124
Semipalmated 49, 67, 82, 124, 149
Snowy 22, 42, 49, 65, 67, 82
Poague, Kevin 37
Pokharel, Anisha 45
Polioptila caerulea
caerulea 90
obscura 90
Poorwill, Common 48, 66, 80, 123, 149
Potter, Joshua 121
Powell, Dave 45
Prairie-Chicken, Greater 3, 7, 16, 26-27, 47, 79, 123
Preheim, Kelly 76
Prettyman, Cathy 36, 76
Probst, Jerry 37, 121
Putney, J. A. 147
Pyle, Peter 64, 147
Pyper, Kathleen 36

Quail, California 47
Quinn, Susan 36, 45, 76, 121

Rahko, Matt 45, 76
Rail,
Virginia 7, 22, 29, 48, 82, 124
Yellow 102, 106

Index to Volume 87

Randall,
Luke 121
Paul 121
Sam 121
Randolph, Lanny 36, 37, 76, 121
Ranglack, Dustin 113
Rasmussen,
P. C. 109
Randy 45
Rick 36
Ratzlaff,
Deb 37
Neal 36, 37, 45, 121
Raven, Common 43, 54, 107
Raynor, Edward 109, 121
Rea, Peter 36
Ream, Ben 109, 121
Redding, Landen 37
Redhead 6, 26-27, 47, 67, 74, 78, 122, 149
Redpoll, Common 3, 12, 42, 56, 134
Redstart, American 60, 70, 94, 137, 152
Reinken, Sandy 36, 139, 146
Reitan, Ken 37
Remsen,
J. V. Jr. 109
Van 76
Reyer,
Al 36, 37, 45, 121
Cindy 36, 37
Richardson,
Abbe 36, 147
Larry 76
Leonard 45
Richter, Jean 37
Rieck, Hugh 36, 37
Rink, Justin 5, 45, 76, 109, 121
Roberts, Gary 5, 23, 36, 37, 45, 109, 121
Robin, American 12, 32-33, 55, 69, 91, 118, 133, 151
Robinson, W. Douglas 45
Robison, Arch 37
Rohlfing, Kyle 121
Roisen, Paul 45, 76, 109, 121
Rolfsmeier, S. 114
Roragen, Keith 5
Rossi, Alex 76
Rosy-Finch,
Black 3, 12
Gray-crowned 12, 56, 134
Rowland, Erin 36
Russell, Linda 76
Rustay, Christopher 76

St. Sauver, Jason 37, 76, 121
Salick, Nicholas 109
Samusevich, Cheryl 76
Sandahl, Dave 45, 76
Sanderling 49, 67, 83, 125, 149
Sanders, Ira 45
Sandpiper,
Baird's 50, 68, 83, 125, 149
Buff-breasted 50, 68, 83, 125
Least 50, 68, 83, 125, 149
Pectoral 50, 68, 83, 125, 149
Semipalmated 50, 68, 83, 125, 149
Solitary 50, 83, 125, 149
Spotted 22, 50, 68, 83, 149
Stilt 49, 67, 83, 125, 149
Upland 49, 67, 82, 124
Western 50, 83, 125, 149
White-rumped 50, 68, 83
Sapsucker,
Red-naped 42, 52, 102, 119, 130, 148, 150
Yellow-bellied 3, 10, 20, 30-31, 52, 130
Scaup,
Greater 6, 27, 47, 74, 79, 122
Lesser 3, 6, 26-27, 47, 67, 79, 122
Schaefer, Brisco 36
Schilmoeller, Mike 18
Schiltz, Amber 37, 76
Schmid, Rick 5, 20, 36, 37, 45, 109
Schmitt, Steve 37, 147
Scholar, Eric 37
Scholten, Chace 76
Schukman, John 76
Schumacher, Iris 45
Schuurmans, Gary 37
Schwartz, Shari 36, 37, 45, 59, 65, 109, 121
Schwery, Duane 20
Scoter,
Black 6, 122
Surf 6, 43, 47, 122
White-winged 6, 23, 122
Seniawski, Charles 5
Shaw, Tyrone 5, 45
Shoe, John 45

Index to Volume 87

Shoveler, Northern 6, 26-27, 46, 67, 77, 122, 149
Shrike,
Loggerhead 10, 53, 69, 88, 131, 151
Northern 10, 30-31, 53, 131
Shurtliff, Matt 45, 76, 109
Shuster, Ken 36
Siegfried, Ruben 121
Silcock, W. Ross 3-14, 36, 37, 62-65, 74-95, 109, 114, 118-138
Simonsen, Tate 37
Siskin, Pine 12, 32-33, 56, 69, 91, 118, 134, 151
Sitta carolinensis
carolinensis 89
nelsoni 89
Skaggs, Kent 36, 45, 76, 109, 121
Slatin, Patricia 45
Smith,
Gwen 37
Joshua 109
Karen Kutz 147
Marie 5, 37, 76, 81, 82, 109, 118
Patricia 36
Rod 37
Snipe, Wilson's 8, 28-29, 50, 83, 125, 149
Solitaire, Townsend's 12, 32-33, 42, 55, 90, 133, 151
Sommerich, Chris 37
Sora 42, 48-49, 67, 82, 124
Sorkin, Sanford 45
Southard, Barry 45
Sparkman, Stuart 76
Sparrow,
American Tree 13, 34-35, 57, 135
Baird's 43, 57, 74, 92, 99, 107
Black-chinned 63
Brewer's 57, 62, 92, 135
Cassin's 57, 92, 135
Chipping 13, 57, 69, 92, 135, 152
Clay-colored 57, 70, 92, 135, 152
Field 13, 57, 70, 92, 135, 152
Fox 13, 17, 34-35, 57, 64, 135
"Red" 57
"Slate-colored" 57
Grasshopper 57, 69, 92, 98, 135, 152
Harris's 13, 17, 34-35, 57, 92, 135
Henslow's 57, 92, 99, 135
Sparrow, continued
House 12, 32-33, 69, 91, 118, 139, 140, 151
Lark 57, 69, 92, 135, 152
LeConte's 17, 57, 99, 135
Lincoln's 13, 34-35, 58, 135, 152
Nelson's 57, 99, 135
Savannah 58, 62, 64, 70, 92, 135
Song 13, 25, 34-35, 58, 70, 92, 135, 152
Swamp 13, 34-35, 58, 92, 135
Vesper 17, 57, 92, 135, 152
White-crowned 13, 34-35, 57, 135, 152
White-throated 13, 25, 34-35, 57, 135
Starling, European 12, 32-33, 42, 56, 69, 91, 134, 140, 151
Stearns, Ruthie 5, 17, 36, 37, 45, 66, 76, 109
Steffen, Cooper 45
Steinauer, Gerry 76
Steinbeck, Mary 36
Stevens, Sheila 37
Stevenson, April 37
Stilt, Black-necked 43, 49, 82, 124
Stone, Dorie 147
Stolz, Scott 45
Stotz, D. F. 109
Stougard, Anita 37
Strand, Caleb 109
Straus, Barb 45
Stringham, Ned 37
Strycker, Noah 45
Such, Marcel 45
Sullivan,
B. L. 147
Jim 45
John 45, 109
Linda 45, 76, 121
Sutherland, D. 114
Sutton, M. O. 114
Swaim, Anne 45
Swainson, William 64
Swallow,
Bank 54, 69, 89, 132
Barn 54, 69, 89, 132, 151
Cliff 54, 69, 89, 132, 151
Northern Rough-winged 54, 69, 89, 132

Index to Volume 87

Swallow, continued
Tree 54, 69, 89, 132, 151
Violet-green 54, 89, 132
Swan,
Mute 5, 46, 105-106, 122
Trumpeter 5, 15, 23, 26-27, 46, 76, 122
Tundra 3, 5, 23, 27, 46, 122
Swanson,
G. A. 114
Heidi 36, 37
Mike 5
Phil 5, 23, 24, 37, 121
Swenson,
Jim 5, 45
Linda 5, 45
Swift,
Chimney 48, 67, 80, 118, 124, 149
White-throated 48, 80, 124

Tanager,
Scarlet 61, 70, 95, 138
Summer 61, 70, 95, 138
Western 61, 95, 108, 138, 152
Taylor, Bailey 37
Teal,
Blue-winged 27, 46, 67, 76, 122, 149
Cinnamon 43, 46, 76, 122
Green-winged 6, 26-27, 47, 67, 77, 122
Tern,
Arctic 106, 126
Black 50, 68, 84, 126
Caspian 50, 84, 126
Common 51, 84, 126, 150
Forster's 51, 68, 84, 126, 150
Least 50, 68, 84, 126
Thelen, Mike 45
Thiele, Jason 5, 36, 45, 76, 121
Thieman, Claudelle 36
Thomas, Diane 45
Thornton, Bethany 36, 37
Thrasher,
Brown 12, 55-56, 69, 91, 133, 151
Sage 74, 91, 133
Thrush,
Gray-cheeked 55, 69, 91, 133
Hermit 12, 32-33, 55, 133
Swainson's 55, 69, 74, 91, 133, 151
olive-backed 91
russet-backed 91
Varied 3, 12, 43, 55, 103, 107
Wood 55, 69, 91, 133
Timm,
Alexander 37
Caroline 37
Paul 37, 45, 76, 78
Tiner, R. W. 114
Titmouse, Tufted 3, 11, 32-33, 54, 69, 89, 132
Toll, Jerry 5, 36, 37, 45, 76, 121, 138-147
Tønnessen, David 45, 76, 121
Towhee,
Eastern 13, 58, 70, 93, 136
eastern Rocky Mountain 93
Green-tailed 58, 92, 135
Spotted 13, 34-35, 58, 70, 74, 93, 136
Spotted/Eastern 93, 136
Spotted x Eastern 93
Towler, Rob 37
Turkey, Wild 7, 26-27, 47, 67, 79, 123, 149
Turnstone, Ruddy 22, 42, 49, 65, 67

Urban, Lorri 36
Usasz, Moni 37, 109, 121

Van Den Broeke,
Cynthia 45, 76, 109, 121
Matthew 45, 76, 121
Vanderpoel, John 148
Veery 55, 90, 133
Vireo,
Bell's 53, 69, 88, 131, 151
Blue-headed 53, 88, 131-132
Cassin's 42, 53, 131
Philadelphia 53, 65, 69, 132
Plumbeous 53, 88, 132
Red-eyed 54, 69, 88, 132, 151
Warbling 54, 69, 88, 132, 151
Eastern subspecies 88
Western subspecies 88
White-eyed 20, 53, 97, 102, 131
Yellow-throated 53, 69, 88, 131
Vireo gilvus
brewsteri 88
gilvus 88

Index to Volume 87

Viste-Sparkman, Karen 76
Vogel, Alyx 36
Von Ehwegen, Jerry 37
Vrtiska, Mark 78
Vulture, Turkey 16, 29, 51, 68, 84, 127, 150

Wagner, Carol 37
Walgren,
  Bruce 36
  Donna 36
Walker,
  Matthew 45
  T. J. 5, 36, 37, 45, 66, 109, 121, 148
Walter, John 121
Walz, Bobby 36, 45
Warbler,
  Bay-breasted 60, 70, 137
  Black-and-white 59, 94, 136
  Blackburnian 60, 66, 137
  Blackpoll 60, 70, 95, 119, 137
  Black-throated Blue 60, 137
  Black-throated Gray 97
  Black-throated Green 61, 138
  Blue-winged 42, 59, 136
  Canada 61, 118, 138
  Cape May 60, 105, 119, 137
  Cerulean 60
  Chestnut-sided 60, 95, 137
  Connecticut 59, 104, 137
  Golden-winged 59, 136
  Hooded 60, 104, 137
  Kentucky 24, 59, 94, 137
  MacGillivray's 59, 94, 108, 137
  Magnolia 60, 95, 137
  Mourning 59, 70, 94, 137
  Nashville 24, 42, 59, 137
  Orange-crowned 59, 70, 94, 137, 152
  Palm 14, 60, 137
  Pine 60, 137
  Prairie 105
  Prothonotary 42, 59, 94, 137
  Swainson's 104
  Tennessee 59, 70, 94, 137
  Townsend's 138
  Virginia's 137
  Wilson's 61, 95, 138, 152
  Worm-eating 107
  Yellow 60, 70, 95, 137, 152
  Yellow-rumped 34-35, 137, 152
    Audubon's 14, 60-61, 95, 138
    Myrtle 14, 60, 137
  Yellow-throated 61, 95, 108, 138
Warrick, Gordon 45
Waterthrush,
  Louisiana 24, 42, 59, 65, 70, 94, 136
  Northern 59, 65, 70, 94, 136
Watson, Jesse 76
Watts, B. D. 147
Waxwing,
  Bohemian 12, 32-33, 56, 119, 134
  Cedar 12, 32-33, 56, 69, 91, 134, 151
Weber, Andi 45
Wehtje, Walter 76
Weidemann,
  Don 5, 45, 76, 109, 121
  Marion 5, 45, 76, 109, 121
Weinell, Don 76
Wells, Bob 37
Wesche, T. A. 114
Wesely, Amber 5
Wessel, Cassidy 76
Whalen, D. M. 147
Wheeler, B. K. 147
Whiles, M. R. 114
Whimbrel 49
Whip-poor-will, Eastern 48, 65-66, 67, 80, 123
Whistling-Duck,
  Black-bellied 46, 76, 99, 118, 121
  Fulvous 97, 99-100
White,
  Bob 76
  Bruce 109
Whitney,
  Ron 121
  Susan 121
Whittecar, Juanita 45, 76
Wichert, Rebecca 45
Wickersham, Sue 36
Wiese, Josh 36, 110-114
Wigeon, American 3, 6, 26-27, 47, 67, 77, 122
Wiggins,
  Andrea 36, 121
  Everett 36
Wilbur, Malcolm 45
Wilcox, Bobby 45
Wilder, Roger 121
Willard, Cory 76

Index to Volume 87

Willet 50, 68, 83, 125
Willison, Michael 45, 76, 86, 109, 121
Wilson,
  Anne 5
  Erica 5
  Max 121
Winger, B. M. 109
Winker, K. 109
Winkler, Dan 76
Winter,
  Elizabeth 5, 17, 22, 45, 76, 109, 121
  Robert 45
Witter,
  Chuck 36
  Nell 36
Wittman, Tom 45
Wittwer, Tim 36
Woita, Brian 45
Wolf, Cal 45
Wolff, Duane 36, 37
Wolken, Alyssa 147
Wood, Chris 45
Woodcock, American 8, 43, 50, 83, 125
Woodpecker,
  American Three-toed 43, 52, 98
  Downy 10, 30-31, 52, 68, 86, 98, 119, 130, 150
    Rocky Mountain 119, 130
  Hairy 10, 25, 30-31, 52, 68, 74, 86, 98, 130, 150
    Rocky Mountain 86
  Lewis's 52, 86, 119, 130
  Pileated 10, 25, 30-31, 43, 52, 65, 68, 86, 130
  Red-bellied 9, 30-31, 52, 68, 86, 130, 150
  Red-headed 9, 16, 30-31, 52, 68, 86, 130, 150
Wood-Pewee,
  Eastern 53, 68, 86, 130, 150
  Western 53, 86, 130, 150
Worm, Jo 36
Wren,
  Bewick's 97
  Carolina 11, 25, 32-33, 55, 69, 74, 90, 118, 133, 151
  House 54, 69, 90, 133, 151
  Marsh 11, 32-33, 55, 90, 133, 151
  Pacific 11
  Rock 90, 133, 151
  Sedge 3, 11, 42, 54-55, 90, 133
  Winter 11, 32-33, 54, 133
Wright,
  Gregory 76, 77, 121
  Rick 5, 45, 62-65
Wurzer, Kelly 37

Yellowlegs,
  Greater 8, 50, 83, 125, 150
  Lesser 50, 68, 83, 125, 149
Yellowthroat, Common 60, 70, 94, 137, 152

Zeglen, Nancy 45

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President and Newsletter Editor: Joel Jorgensen, 220 Bruce Drive, Lincoln NE 68510; nebraska.ornithologists.union@gmail.com
Vice-President: Robin Harding, 2028 34th Road, Minden NE 68959; snowbunting@rcom-ne.com
Secretary: Ruth Stearns, 3200 Laredo Drive, Lincoln NE 68516; ruthie.stearns@gmail.com
Treasurer: Jan Johnson, 86252-581 Ave., Wakefield NE 68784; janbirder@gmail.com
Librarian: Anita Breckbill, 3237 R Street, Lincoln NE 68503; abreckbill1@unl.edu

Directors:
William Flack, 415 W 24th St #2, Kearney NE 68845; sparvophile@yahoo.com (2020)
Don Paseka, 1585 Co. Rd. 14 Blvd., Ames NE 68621; paseka76@gmail.com (2021)
T. J. Walker, 694 Grover Road, Milford NE; thomas.walker@nebraska.gov (2022)

Records Committee Chairman: Mark Brogie, 508 Seeley, Creighton NE 68729; mabrogie@gmail.com
Editor of *The Nebraska Bird Review*: Janis Paseka, 1585 Co. Rd. 14 Blvd., Ames NE 68621; paseka76@gmail.com
Occurrence Report Compiler: Ross Silcock, P.O. Box 57, Tabor IA 51653; silcock@rosssilcock.com

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Table of Contents

Fall Field Report, August - November 2019
by W. Ross Silcock 118

2019 Hitchcock Raptor Banding Project in Perspective
by Jerry Toll 138

Imperial Fall Field Days, Sept 13-15, 2019 148

Index to Volume 87 153

Subscription and Organization Information 167